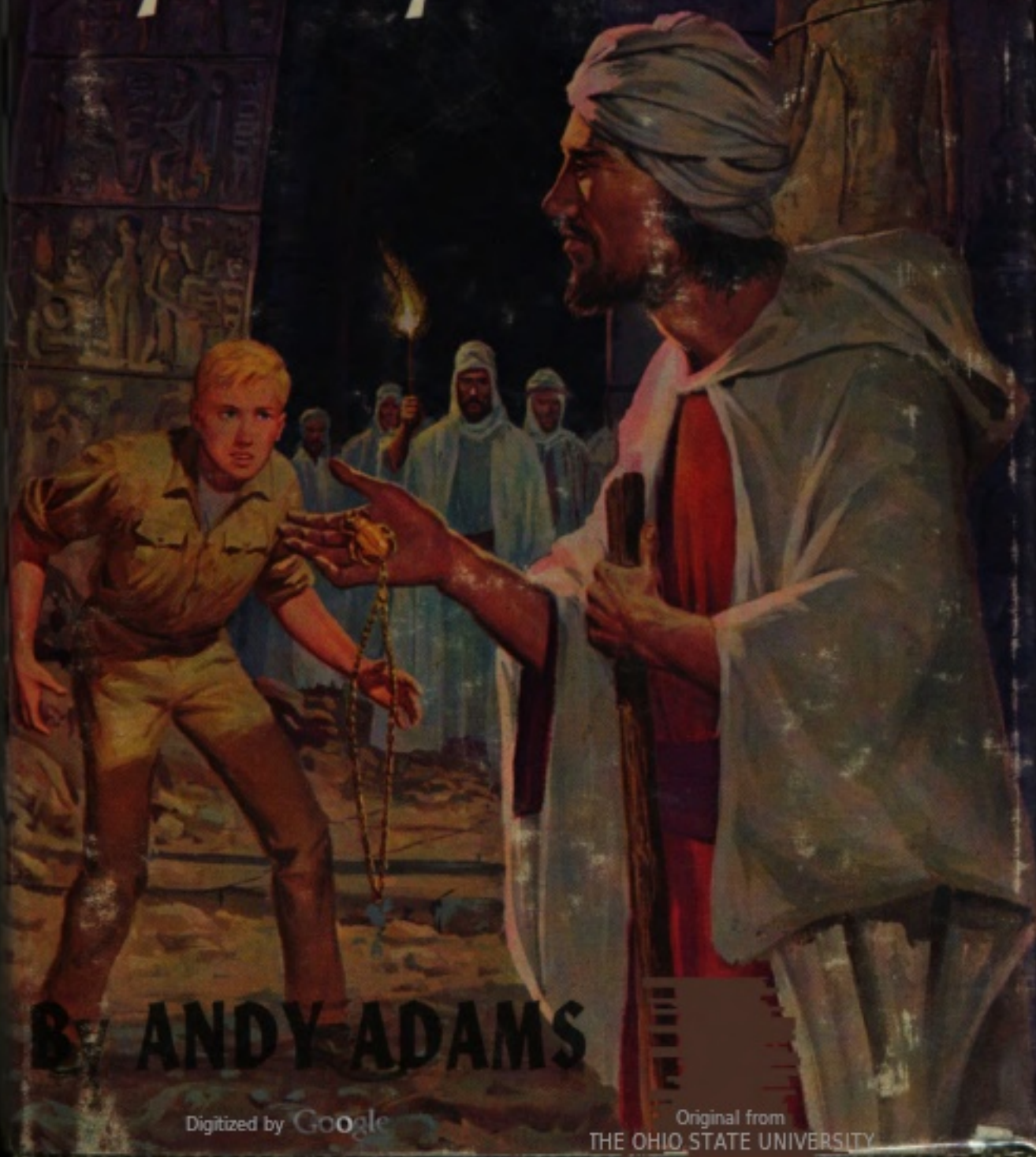


A BIFF BREWSTER MYSTERY ADVENTURE

\$2.95

Egyptian Scarab Mystery



BY ANDY ADAMS

Digitized by Google

Original from
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

A Biff Brewster Mystery Adventure

EGYPTIAN SCARAB MYSTERY

By ANDY ADAMS

A "LIVING" MUMMY haunts Biff Brewster's every step on the expedition seeking the lost tomb of Egypt's ancient Prince Reth. Fighting time to find the treasure crypt designed by Pattak the Tomb Builder, the archaeologists plead with the Egyptian government to postpone construction of a dam which will flood the site. But time is not the only enemy of the expedition. For Pattak himself — whose mummy is missing from a London museum — seemingly has returned to life to oppose the violation of his masterwork!

The curator of the museum, determined to prove his theory that the "forgotten Pharaoh" was banished from the Valley of Kings, arms Biff with a precious golden scarab to guard him in the Valley of Ghosts.

Biff successfully braves the perils of the mummy's menace, only to find himself challenged by worshippers of Thoth, an even older deity of the dead, who supposedly lost the battle of the gods centuries ago.

Trapped by the duplicity of a friend, Biff uses ancient magic to extricate himself and his companions, only to learn that it takes modern miracles to keep the "mummy" from hoarding the treasure for himself alone!

GROSSET & DUNLAP
NEW YORK 10, N. Y.





© GROSSET & DUNLAP, INC., 1963

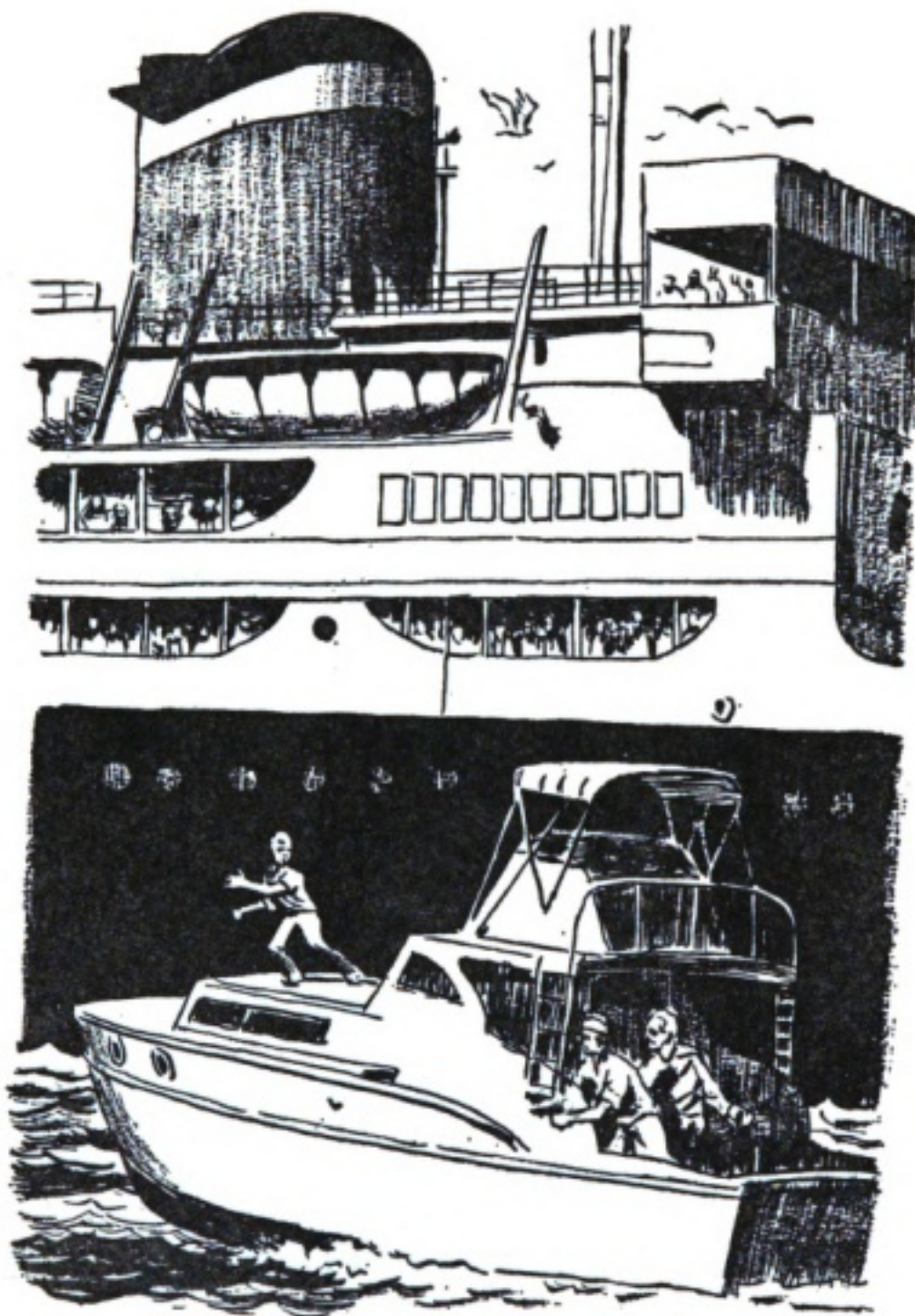
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Egyptian Scarab Mystery

EGYPTIAN SCARAB MYSTERY

BIFF BREWSTER MYSTERY ADVENTURES
BRAZILIAN GOLD MINE MYSTERY
MYSTERY OF THE CHINESE RING
HAWAIIAN SEA HUNT MYSTERY
MYSTERY OF THE MEXICAN TREASURE
AFRICAN IVORY MYSTERY
ALASKA GHOST GLACIER MYSTERY
MYSTERY OF THE AMBUSH IN INDIA
MYSTERY OF THE CARIBBEAN PEARLS
EGYPTIAN SCARAB MYSTERY
MYSTERY OF THE TIBETAN CARAVAN



*Both pirates turned in time to see Biff bounding
to the deck*

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
I A Strange Trap	I
II The Riddle of the Vault	11
III The Museum Mystery	19
IV A Weird Intruder	29
V Trouble in Tangier	38
VI The Pirate Crew	47
VII A Strange Visitor	56
VIII The Man in the Courtyard	64
IX Adventure in Cairo	75
X In the Pottery Shop	85
XI A Thwarted Rescue	91
XII The Warehouse of Azab Habu	99
XIII At the Rock Temple	109
XIV The Face from the Past	120
XV Time Runs Short	128
XVI The Scarab Fails	139
XVII The Enemy Takes Over	148
XVIII The Menace of the Nile	156
XIX One Last Chance	163

CHAPTER I

A Strange Trap

"BIFF!"

"Chandra!"

The guests in the quiet lobby of the Hotel Dulwich raised their eyebrows and stared in surprise as they heard the shouts of greeting. The Dulwich, just off Piccadilly Square, was one of the most conservative hotels in London, where people bowed to one another and spoke in murmured tones.

Never did they grab each other and indulge in enthusiastic backslaps, followed by further shouts that sounded like triumphant war whoops. At least, nothing of the sort had ever occurred within the staid domain of the Dulwich, until these two lively young fellows so vigorously announced themselves.

Biff Brewster was the first of the pair to realize their mistake and resume proper decorum. His Hindu friend Chandra was quick to follow his example, as they moved to a corner of the lobby. Still, they kept grinning their welcome, for they had a right to be happy over this lucky meeting in England that had brought them together from opposite sides of the

world—Biff from Indianapolis, U.S.A., Chandra from Calcutta, India.

Biff, sixteen, stocky, broad, and square of shoulders, had keen blue eyes and light blond hair that contrasted with the deep tan of his face. He was half a head taller and looked at least two years older than his slender, grinning friend Chandra.

But Biff knew the strength that Chandra's wiry form possessed. In fact, his arm was still aching from the grip he had received when the Hindu youth had practically pounced upon him in welcome. Now that Chandra had calmed down, there was a wise gleam in his dark eyes, a serious tightening of his lips, even while they retained their smile.

This was the same self-possessed Chandra whom Biff had first met during exciting adventures that they had shared in India. If anything, Chandra seemed wiser and more mature than before. He looked younger because of his clothes. Instead of his native garb, which Biff remembered him wearing in India, Chandra was dressed like an English schoolboy. That wasn't surprising, for Chandra had just finished a term at an English school which he had attended as an international exchange student.

"I had about given you up," Biff told Chandra. "I was sure you must have started back to India by now."

"I almost did," returned Chandra, "but your letter reached me—what is it you say?—in the tick of time!"

"In the *nick* of time," corrected Biff. "Now, what about Egypt? Can you stop off there with Uncle Charlie and me?"

"Very easy," Chandra assured him. "Egypt is on the way to India, and I have all the time I want to get home. Egypt would be nice to see."

"Come along, then, and I'll give you a preview of it right now, particularly the part that will interest us most."

"We will see some of Egypt, here in London?"

"A lot of it. Right here in London."

Outside the hotel, Biff hailed the first cab that came along. It was a traffic-scarred old vehicle that snorted and rattled its way from the bustle of Piccadilly while Biff tried to direct the beef-faced cabby to an address in the Westminster area.

"The place is called the Memorial Museum of Occidental and Oriental Antiquities," began Biff. "You'll know it when you see it—"

"But I won't know where to look for it," objected the cabby, "unless you give me that jaw-breaking name all over again—and slower."

Biff repeated the "jawbreaker" for the cabby's benefit. The final word rang a bell.

"Oh, you mean the Antiquated Museum!" he exclaimed. "Why didn't you say so? Just off Bayswater Road it is, and I've driven past it often. Only, 'arf the time it's closed, you know, so maybe you won't get in there."

"I have a letter of admission," stated Biff, "but it's only good until six o'clock. It's after five now, so we must hurry."

The cabby glanced back as though suspicious of anyone carrying a letter of admission to the museum.

Then he settled to his driving, muttering to himself. Biff, meanwhile, briefed Chandra as to the purpose of the trip.

"It's one of Uncle Charlie's ideas," explained Biff. "You know that company of his, Explorations Unlimited, that goes hunting for the most impossible things—"

"I know," put in Chandra, with a nod. "Like finding the Chonsi Lama in the Himalaya Mountains of Tibet, the time when I was along."

"Except," Biff smiled, "that we were in on that ahead of Uncle Charlie. Remember?"

Chandra remembered. Biff was referring to their adventures surrounding the *Mystery of the Ambush in India*, when the two boys had first met. But Chandra now was looking to the future, not to the past.

"Tell me more," he suggested. "What will we be looking for in Egypt?"

"An ancient tomb," replied Biff. "One belonging to Prince Reth, the forgotten pharaoh. It is hidden in some unknown spot. But people know what the tomb looks like, because in the museum where we are going now, there is a replica of it."

Chandra pursed his forehead, puzzled:

"A replica?"

"A duplicate," explained Biff. "A tomb just like Reth's."

Chandra was still more puzzled.

"If nobody has ever seen this tomb," he asked, "how could they make a duplicate of it?"

"About a hundred years ago," Biff replied, "an

archeologist named Ian MacGregor came across the mummy of an important Egyptian known as Pattak, the Tomb Builder. With it were the plans of many secret tombs to which mummies of important pharaohs and their relics were moved so that grave robbers could not uncover them.

"All the tombs designed by Pattak have been found excepting that belonging to Prince Reth, which must have been particularly well hidden, because although he ruled Egypt for a brief period, he was regarded as an impostor by the other pharaohs. So the tomb of Reth could not have been placed in the Valley of the Kings, or any other place reserved for pharaohs only."

As Biff paused, Chandra's eyes gleamed and his tone became eager:

"Go on, Biff! Tell me more!"

"That's about all, so far," Biff said ruefully. "Professor MacGregor had the replica built from Pattak's plans and installed in the cellar of the museum. But he never did find the real tomb before he died. People have been looking for it ever since, and now Uncle Charlie intends to have a try."

The cab was lumbering around a corner, and the cabby gave a satisfied grunt as he pointed ahead to a huge, unsightly building of tawny brick and grimy masonry that jutted into the point of a V-shaped area where the street diverged.

"See that?" queried the cabby. "It's the Antiquated Museum, crowding the street as if it owned it, which maybe it does, it's been here that long."

As they drew up before the massive pile and Biff

brought a pound note from his pocket to pay the fare, Chandra suggested:

"Better have the cabby wait, Biff. I have to go back to the station for my luggage, and I have to see about my passport, too."

Biff told the cabby to wait, and they ascended the worn stone steps to the museum door, which was heavy and grated with iron, like the portcullis of an ancient castle. Biff rang a bell, and the door was opened by a tall, balding, blunt-faced man in a faded green uniform with frayed gold braid. Biff handed him a letter and stated:

"I'm Biff Brewster. I am to meet my uncle, Mr. Charles Keene. We have an appointment with the curator, Mr. Meadowbrook."

Although the letter mentioned only Biff, the attendant gestured both boys in through the entry hall, past rooms stocked with odd curios, and pointed to a stairway at the end of the hall.

"That takes you down to the Egyptian Room," the blunt-faced man informed them. "You can wait there for Mr. Keene. He has not arrived yet."

The stairs made several turns, and at the bottom, Biff and Chandra halted in astonishment. The Egyptian Room occupied a huge, high-vaulted cellar, guarded by two crouching stone sphinxes. Beyond were statues of Egyptian deities, with heads of creatures such as lions, elephants, and hawks. Toward the far wall, which bore stone slabs inscribed with Egyptian hieroglyphics, were upright mummy cases of

assorted sizes, with human figures painted on their surfaces.

All were faced toward the stairway, and each case bore a placard identifying its occupant. Most conspicuous of all was a large case with the title:

PATTAK—THE TOMB BUILDER

The rounded upper portion of the mummy case bore the face of a man with high forehead, wide black eyebrows, and equally jet-hued eyes that peered from each side of a straight nose. The lips were wide but thin, wearing just the trace of a smile. Below, the face tapered to a pointed chin; then, painted shoulders followed the widening shape of the mummy case itself. The full figure was garbed in a close-fitting white robe, decorated with colored jewels. The painted hands were crossed, each pressed flat, with fingers straightened upon the opposite arms, just above the elbows.

So fascinated were Biff and Chandra by this image of Pattak and the other painted figures facing them, that several minutes passed before the boys noted a side archway leading to a high vault beneath the stairway. There, built of large blocks of perfectly fitted stone, was the replica of Reth's tomb, the lost abode of the forgotten pharaoh.

It stood a dozen feet high and had a tall but narrow entrance just large enough for one person to enter. The cellar itself was well lighted except for some shadowy corners. And now the boys saw the reason

for those. Some of the lights had been turned to focus on the compact but massively constructed tomb, showing a passage that turned sharply to the right. The glare showed openings in the inner walls, indicating chambers lighted by an indirect glow.

"Come along, Chandra," Biff exclaimed. "Let's look inside!"

Chandra started to follow Biff, then hesitated.

"I haven't time," he said. "I've kept the cab waiting too long already. I'd better go now, Biff, and meet you at the hotel later."

"All right."

As Chandra returned to the stairway and went up, Biff began his exploration of the tomb, which proved short indeed. The passage simply led him around inside the walls, becoming gloomier all the way, until it ended in a central room, square in shape and illuminated, though dimly, by the high opening from the passage wall. His curiosity satisfied, Biff retraced his course out toward the stone doorway.

As he reached the final turn, Biff paused. He was aware of a stealthy, creeping sound, that seemed caught and magnified by the hollow of the tomb. Biff wasn't quite sure of its direction, until he saw a shadow glide inward on the yellowish stone that formed the flooring just within the narrow entrance. Then he realized that he'd hesitated too many moments.

Madly, Biff sprang for the narrow doorway, ready to meet the encroaching menace at any cost, if only he could get out. But his leap, due to that momentary delay, was too late. At the entrance, a new sweep



The whole side wall was sliding shut!

of blackness slid across his path. The whole side wall of the doorway was sliding shut, a gliding, silent curtain of solid stone that would have crushed Biff if he had tried to squeeze through the closing crack.

Instead, he instinctively recoiled, inches only from that path of doom. As he did, he saw a figure twist away. He heard a triumphant laugh. In the focused glare that came through the narrowing crack, Biff caught one short glimpse of a leering, gleaming face, with the black-browed features and piercing eyes of Pattak, the Tomb Builder!

Then, sight, like sound, was totally cut off, as the granite wall closed smoothly and completely, sealing Biff within a prison of utter silence and absolute blackness!

CHAPTER II

The Riddle of the Vault

AS BIFF flattened back against the inner wall, he felt as though he had received a stunning blow. It was like wakening from a bad dream in the middle of the night, but in reverse. From a wide awake state, Biff had been pitched into a realm of complete unreality.

Strange whispers gathered in the surrounding darkness. They grew louder, until Biff held his breath to listen. Then they faded, only to begin again, the moment he relaxed. When Biff started to move along the passage, creeping sounds stalked behind him, ceasing like the whispers the moment he turned in hope of tracing them in the blackness.

Then Biff realized what those sounds were. Fortunately, he had spent long periods in darkened places before, such as mines and caves, so he knew how to analyze situations like this. The whispers that he heard were caused by his own breathing. The footsteps that stalked him were also his own. This closed tomb was a huge echo chamber which magnified and distorted every sound that occurred within it.

Even when Biff calmed, he wondered how long he could stand the overpowering clutch of that thick darkness. There wasn't the slightest rift in the closely fitted outer wall of the tomb; not a crack where a tiny ray of light could filter through. The stone floor under Biff's feet had been built in as a solid foundation. It was exactly as if he had been transported from the heart of modern London to a forgotten tomb in ancient Egypt, so completely did time stand still.

That thought was one that Biff fought down, along with the urge for wild action that he knew would turn to panic. He wanted to claw at the stone wall that blocked him, to smash it with his fists. Then the torture of the endless waiting ceased, as Biff saw a tiny but welcome glow, the luminous dial of his wrist watch!

The steady sweep of the second hand brought a return to reality. Biff remembered now that he had something better than a wrist watch to counteract the darkness. Ever since his arrival in London, he had been carrying a pen-sized flashlight in his inside pocket. Biff groped for it now, fervently hoping he hadn't left it in another jacket. He found it and turned its disk of light on the wall ahead of him.

"Pretty small," Biff muttered, half aloud. "Not much bigger than half a dollar."

He'd forgotten the echoing space about him. He was suddenly startled as the walls mocked back in dwindling whispers: "Half a dollar . . . Half a dollar . . . Half a dollar . . ."

"Correction," murmured Biff. "After all, this is still London. I should have said half a crown."

"Half a crown . . . Half a crown . . . Half a crown . . ."

Biff laughed as the echoes died, and he didn't mind the taunting tones that his mirth produced. One humorous touch was all he'd needed to fix his mind on the grimly impossible task ahead, that of getting out of this trap. Biff wasn't rating it as impossible; not any longer.

Methodically, he played the flashlight at an angle, so that its beam widened as it followed along the inner surface of the solid outside wall. So smooth, so perfect was the masonry that it was impossible to trace where the wall ended and the secret door began.

Since the passage turned to the right just inside the entrance, Biff calculated that the stone door must have slithered out from the side wall that blocked the passage on the left. In fact, he remembered now that it had been coming from that direction when he gained that last glimpse through the closing crack and saw the leering face of Pattak.

Running his hand back along the stretch where the door must be, Biff could still find no difference in its surface. But he decided to look for the place where it had come from, even if it didn't provide a way out. Turning about, Biff followed the passage to the right, clear around inside the walls, until he reached the central chamber where he had paused briefly earlier.

Even with just his tiny flashlight, Biff made a dis-

covery. This central chamber wasn't the dead end that he had taken it to be when he had seen it by the light from the high opening in its front wall. It was actually an antechamber to a smaller room, which Biff reached by squeezing through a narrow opening. This was evidently intended to be walled up as a secret vault at the corner to the left of the entrance.

Biff ran the light along what he knew must be the outer wall, but it was as solid as the rest, with no sign of grooves for the sliding door. Probably the wall was of double thickness, with a space between, but that was no help. Biff studied the side wall, then turned to the back of the little vault, gave his light a chance play toward the ceiling, and held it fixed there.

Whether he was imagining things, Biff did not know, but the ceiling was low, of that he was sure. Up near the top of the wall was a thin, straight crack between the edge of a block and the stone ceiling just above it. So noticeable was the gap that Biff was sure the block must be loose.

Biff turned out the flashlight to conserve its battery and put it in his pocket. Pushing his hands straight up the wall, he raised himself on tiptoes, hoping his fingers would reach the loose stone in the wall. They must have, for he could feel the stone give slightly under his fingertips, or at least he imagined it did. An inch or two more; that was all Biff needed. He stretched, hoping to get it.

"Click!"

Biff paused for the moment, thinking that his press-

ing fingers had caused the sound, but they couldn't have, for it was instantly followed by three more, that came quickly: "Click-click-click."

Biff eased down from his stretch, as the weird sound was repeated: "Click-click." Where it was coming from, he couldn't guess, for the echoes in this little vault were much trickier than those that he had heard along the corridors. Biff was moving about now, and the sounds seemed to follow him, coming from the walls themselves, in a repeated fashion:

"Click-click . . . *Click* . . . Click! Click-click . . . *Click* . . . Click!"

The meaning of those clicks struck home to Biff. He waited, hoping to hear them again. And they came, from somewhere deep in the wall, in the same succession: One long and three shorts . . . Two shorts . . . Two shorts, a long and a short. . . . Two shorts, a long and a short. . . .

This wasn't the spirit of Prince Reth, making ghostly raps in the copy of the tomb built by Pattak. It was somebody outside, tapping a message in International Morse Code, repeating the call signal: B-I-F-F!

Biff pounced to the front wall so hurriedly that it jarred him as he hit it in the darkness. That was where the taps were coming from. They were saying: "Biff, hear this. . . . Biff, answer this . . ."

Answer it Biff did, using the big, old-fashioned room key from the Hotel Dulwich, which proved perfect for the purpose. The sender from the outside wall promptly identified himself as Charles Keene and

furnished the information that they were working to get the tomb open. During the coded conversation, Biff's uncle put the query:

"Which side was it was closed from . . . The outside . . . Or the inside . . . ?"

"From the outside," clattered Biff. "If it had closed from the inside, I would be out by now."

"State where you are at present. . . ."

"In an inside corner that forms an inner vault . . ."

"Come out of there. Get back to the door. Tap through to us from there."

Flashlight in hand, Biff made his way out through the passages and began tapping from his side of the door. Messages were few and brief from then on. Mostly, Keene was trying to trace the outline of the door and find places where hollow tones would indicate thinner blocks of masonry. Biff kept helping, working in the darkness, not just to save the flashlight juice, but because he could follow his uncle's taps more closely.

At last, came Keene's coded words:

"I have it. . . . Stand back, Biff. . . ."

Biff stood back and saw the wall slide open, but much more slowly than it had closed. The reason was plain as Charles Keene wormed his way into the opening. He was pushing back the barrier against heavy pressure, which would have become a crushing force, had it gained momentum. The blunt-faced attendant was there, helping him, but doing it quite clumsily, so Biff threw himself into the breach. The door rolled

back like a stone curtain, disappeared into the side wall, and locked itself there. Uncle Charlie mopped his forehead as Biff came out blinking in the light, which was dazzlingly brilliant after the blackness of the tomb.

"It's just luck that I found you, Biff," declared Keene, clapping his hand on his nephew's shoulder. "Montague, here"—he gestured to the attendant—"was sure that you had left with Chandra. But I had already talked with Chandra outside, and he told me you were down here in the tomb."

"You mean the cabby didn't wait for Chandra?"

"That's right. He was looking for another cab when I pulled up, so I let him take mine."

Keene stepped into the open doorway of the tomb and ran his fingers up to a tiny niche at the top, where Biff saw a short peg set in the masonry.

"There's the catch that held the door shut," said Uncle Charlie. "But how did the thing happen to close on you?"

"Somebody released it." Biff stared first at Montague, whose face was as blunt as ever. Then, pointing out into the mummy room, Biff added, "Somebody who darted out there."

"You mean you saw him?" Keene asked quickly.

"I saw his face." Biff walked out to the biggest mummy case and went around to look at it, full front. "I would have sworn that it was Pattak's—alive!"

"Perhaps," Uncle Charlie observed dryly, "all you saw was the painted face on the mummy case."

"I thought of that," returned Biff. "But it is looking straight toward the stairway, not in the direction of the tomb, over in the alcove."

"Quite right," Keene agreed, studying the angle as Biff described it. Then, turning to Montague, he asked, "You haven't seen any living mummies walking about the museum, have you? Lately, I mean?"

Montague either failed to catch the whimsy in Uncle Charlie's tone, or he ignored it outright. Stiffly, the blunt-faced attendant responded:

"Sir, all the mummies here have been dead three thousand years or more. Right now, they are all where they have always been, and should be. In their mummy cases. That goes for Pattak too, as you can see for yourself!"

Dramatically, Montague unclamped the side of the mummy case and swung its upright lid open with a grating sound. Turning to look inside, he halted, his blunt face frozen, wide-mouthed. He was not alone in his surprise. It was shared by Biff Brewster and his uncle.

The mummy case of Pattak, the Tomb Builder, was empty!

CHAPTER III

The Museum Mystery

BOTH Biff and his uncle were startled by the mystery of the missing mummy, but the effect on Montague was much greater. The stolid museum attendant suddenly became frantic. Under the glow of the cellar lights, his face purpled and he reared himself to full height as he wagged an accusing finger at Charles Keene, shouting:

"You're to blame for this! You've been down here before, and generally you've come alone. Don't try to deny it! You're the one responsible—"

Montague paused, his excitement at fever pitch. His glaring eyes turned on Biff.

"Or *you're* the one who did it!" stormed the attendant. "You or that Hindu boy who came here with you! You're all responsible! You are all thieves—thieves—"

"Montague!"

The tone came crisply from the stairway. All turned to see a short, elderly man whose head was tilted in a birdlike fashion above his wing-tipped collar. From the annoyance in the man's sharp eyes, his commanding air, Biff didn't have to be told that this was Craig Meadowbrook, the curator of the museum.

Montague confirmed that a moment later. The attendant shrank back into his stolid self and spoke meekly:

"Yes, Mr. Meadowbrook."

"Such unseemly talk!" declared the curator. "My good friend Mr. Keene is certainly no mummy snatcher, and this lad does not have the appearance of a prankster."

"But the mummy of Pattak is gone, sir."

"So I can see. Suppose we look about for it before we lose our tempers and say things we may regret."

Look about they did, with Uncle Charlie and Biff joining in the search. Within ten minutes, Montague himself came upon the missing mummy, behind some empty boxes in a corner of the alcove past the Tomb of Reth. Montague mumbled apologies to Biff and Uncle Charlie as he carried the heavily wrapped mummy back to its case, but from Montague's manner, it was plain that he still felt that the visitors might have tricked him.

Mr. Meadowbrook, meanwhile, was listening with tilted head to Biff's account of how he had been trapped inside the tomb. In conclusion, Biff declared:

"It's lucky that Uncle Charlie came along, though

I had hopes of getting out myself, when I found a loose block in the wall of the inner vault."

"A loose block?" queried the curator. "I should like to see that."

"I'll show you."

Biff started to lead the way into the tomb, then halted with a slight shudder, recalling his recent experience. As he looked back anxiously, Charles Keene smiled.

"Go ahead, Biff," he encouraged. "I'll stand guard while you're inside with Mr. Meadowbrook."

The curator borrowed a large flashlight from Montague, and when they reached the inner vault, threw its full glare on the block that Biff indicated. Next, Biff showed how he had stretched upward in the dark, but this time, when he pressed his fingertips against the block, it failed to budge.

"That's odd," Biff said. "It started to give the last time. There's no reason why it shouldn't give now. That crack above it is at least an inch wide."

"What crack?" demanded Mr. Meadowbrook. "The block is as perfectly fitted as all the rest."

Biff stepped back, looked up into the focused glare, and gave his head a puzzled shake.

"You're right, Mr. Meadowbrook," he agreed. "I must have merely imagined the block was loose."

"Lots of people imagine things when they enter these tombs alone."

"I know," acknowledged Biff. "I thought at first that I heard whispers and footsteps."

"Did you imagine that you saw anything?" Mr. Meadowbrook asked as they were going out around the passage. They were near the outer door, when Biff replied:

"No, not unless you count that crack up by the ceiling."

"You were fortunate," remarked the curator drily. "Many visitors to old tombs think they see lights, skulls, ghostly figures—even faces."

Through Biff's mind flashed the recollection of Pat-tak's face that he had seen in that last fleeting moment before the wall closed. But there was no use bringing that up again. Right now, Charles Keene wanted to take a look at the inner vault, the way Mr. Meadowbrook had. So Biff conducted his uncle in by the angled passage and showed him the block at the ceiling of the vault.

"No crack there," observed Uncle Charlie. He reached up to the block and pressed it hard. "Tight as a drum, too, no matter how you work on it. Let's try something, Biff. Turn on that little flashlight of yours."

Biff complied, and his uncle cut off the big light. The tiny beam of Biff's flashlight seemed sickly indeed as Biff turned it toward the ceiling. Uncle Charlie gave a slight chuckle that brought hollow echoes from the vault.

"Look at those shadows," he said. "Why, you can't even see the line where the wall meets the ceiling. No wonder you thought you saw a crack there!"

They went outside again and reported their simple

finding to Mr. Meadowbrook, who nodded his agreement while Montague stood by with an injured, sullen air, as though he didn't believe a thing that either Biff or his Uncle Charlie had to say.

Mr. Meadowbrook conducted the visitors up to the ground floor and then to his private office, another floor above that. On the way, they passed through various exhibit halls and saw many rooms stocked with antiquities. These ranged from Chinese idols, Siamese costumes, and Japanese armor to clay pottery and figurines that Biff recognized as belonging to the ancient Mayan civilization in Mexico.

One room was filled with priceless curios from India, which Chandra would have appreciated had he remained here in the museum. What impressed Biff most, however, was the way that every nick and cranny in the rambling old building had been turned to use. There were special cabinets in corners, even shelves above doorways, all meticulously labeled as to their contents, a work that had evidently required many years.

Hiding places, too, were numerous. There were closets, cupboards, little winding staircases that led to half-floors and secluded balconies. Biff guessed that if anyone had wanted to hide the mummy of Pattak in a really effective way, there were plenty of places where it could have been put, so that people would have taken a long time finding it.

The curator's office was as thickly stocked with curios as was the rest of the museum. Mr. Meadowbrook managed to find chairs for his visitors. Then he

brought some tin boxes from a bulky safe, spread some papers on his desk, and spoke to Charles Keene. From his side comments, however, it was plain that Mr. Meadowbrook was including Biff in the general discussion.

"As you know," the curator stated, "the Tomb of Reth was constructed by Professor Ian MacGregor, the real founder of this museum, nearly a century ago. Professor MacGregor used actual plans made by Pat-tak, the Tomb Builder, but unfortunately, this cannot be proven, because the plans themselves disappeared later."

Biff was about to ask a question, but stopped himself. However, Mr. Meadowbrook guessed the unspoken query and answered it.

"In those days," he said dryly, "many things disappeared very soon after they were unearthed in Egypt. Later, they would show up in England, Germany, France—whatever country the party of archeologists hailed from. Naturally, there were many Egyptians who did not like it. So they found ways of diverting such shipments before they reached their destinations—and sometimes afterward.

"You would be surprised," the curator added, "how many objects return to Egypt, even after reposing for many years in European museums. Things like mummies, for example."

From a tin box, Mr. Meadowbrook drew some other papers, thumbed through them, and chose a few which he handed to Charles Keene.

"These are copies of plans of existing tombs," the

curator stated, "that were definitely built by Pattak. Unfortunately, none resemble the so-called Tomb of Prince Reth. The only way to prove that Pattak even designed such a tomb is to find the original. Until then, even the status of MacGregor's copy is in doubt."

He spread a map of Egypt on the desk, ran his finger southward along the river Nile, then traced a dotted line that zigzagged to the east.

"Professor MacGregor claimed that the Tomb of Reth would be found in the Valley of Ghosts," continued the curator. "But expeditions have searched there off and on through the years without uncovering anything whatever. Apparently, even the ancient Egyptians shunned the valley, believing it was haunted. One man, however, continued the hunt."

"Dr. Thaddeus Croft." Uncle Charlie nodded. "But even he gave up about ten years ago. He retired to the Isle of Wight, and I can't even get him to answer my letters, let alone come out of his seclusion, as I've pleaded with him to do."

"Your pleas have been answered," Mr. Meadowbrook informed him, with his thin smile. "Dr. Croft was here in this office this very morning. He is on his way to Cairo, where he will meet you at the Hotel Alhambra, about ten days from now."

"But we'll be flying to Tangier tomorrow!" Uncle Charlie exclaimed. "And from there to Cairo. I've already told you my plans, so why didn't you ask Dr. Croft to wait in London overnight and fly along with us?"

"I did," replied Mr. Meadowbrook. "But he will have nothing to do with such modern atrocities as airplanes. He left on the boat train for Dover, where he will cross the English Channel, continue by train to the Riviera, and there take ship for Egypt."

Mr. Meadowbrook began gathering papers and placing them in a large Manila envelope which he tendered to Uncle Charlie.

"Dr. Croft has copies of these," Mr. Meadowbrook explained. "Plans, maps, reports, translations of inscriptions, all pertaining to the Valley of Ghosts and the previous attempts to find the Tomb of Reth. He wants you to have a set too, so you can study up on the subject before you meet him. He will be glad to head the expedition that you are planning to the Valley of Ghosts."

Never before had Biff seen his uncle speechless from enthusiasm, but Biff wasn't surprised. During the past few days, Uncle Charlie had mentioned Dr. Croft frequently, but always somewhat glumly, saying how much he wished that the veteran Egyptologist would join in the coming expedition. Now, things were working out as Charles Keene wanted.

Meanwhile, Mr. Meadowbrook was bringing something from a desk drawer. With a smile, the curator turned to Biff.

"I have something for you, too," he said, "this ancient Egyptian scarab which was brought back years ago by Professor MacGregor. It is supposed to possess magic properties."

The scarab was made of gold and resembled a huge

beetle, with folded wings. Oval in shape, it was so large that when Biff held it in his palm, he could just about close his fist around it. Two glowing, deep-set rubies formed the beetle's eyes, and the golden wings were so delicately engraved that they seemed to form cabalistic letters. The more Biff studied the scarab, the more it intrigued him.

"In case of danger," added Mr. Meadowbrook, retaining his knowing smile, "I cannot guarantee its talismanic properties, but carrying it should give you confidence, if you are ever again trapped as you were here."

Biff, remembering how the luminous dial of the wrist watch had steadied his shaky nerves, was inclined to agree that the golden scarab might be helpful, too. He thanked Mr. Meadowbrook for the memento, and the curator ushered Biff and his uncle downstairs to the big iron street door. On the way, they passed Montague, dozing at his post beside a table.

"Look at that!" said Mr. Meadowbrook wearily. "Anything could walk out of here—even a mummy, if it came to life!"

Chandra was at the Hotel Dulwich when Biff and his Uncle Charlie arrived there. During dinner, the Hindu youth listened eagerly to Biff's account of being trapped in the tomb. Chandra was quick with questions on every detail, for mystery was literally in his makeup. In India, Chandra had worked for a fakir named Jinnah Jad, so he knew every trick of the trade.

They all turned in early that night, and they were up by the time the hotel breakfast room opened. Then

they were off for Croydon Airport, where Charles Keene had reserved three tickets for the first flight to Madrid. There they would take another plane for Tangier.

A newscast was coming over a loudspeaker in the waiting room as their plane was announced. Biff gave it little attention, and beckoned for Chandra to come along. But the Hindu youth, his face suddenly tense, said, "Wait!"

Biff knew that mood of Chandra's. When something startling was due to happen, Chandra had a way of sensing it. Perhaps something in the newscaster's tone was responsible; but whatever the case, the surprise announcement came:

"Latest report from Scotland Yard! The London police are confronted by an exciting case, indeed! The chief attendant in a private museum, J. K. Montague, has been found unconscious, possibly dying, struck down in the vault of an ancient Egyptian tomb! Added to that mystery—prepare yourselves for a shocker, now!—the principal suspect is a mummy, missing from its place in the museum! According to detectives—"

Biff and Chandra didn't hear the rest. The newscast was drowned by the call for all passengers to board the plane for Madrid, and Charles Keene was waving for the boys to join him at the gate. It was Biff who made the decision to go or stay. He turned to Chandra with the words:

"Let's go!"

CHAPTER IV

A Weird Intruder

EVEN before the big airliner took off from Croydon, Biff, seated beside Uncle Charlie, was telling him about the surprise newscast. To Biff's relief, Charles Keene decided that his nephew and Chandra had done the right thing when they hurried along and boarded the plane, and that nothing could be gained by getting off at this last moment.

"You can't go by a chance radio report," declared Uncle Charlie, as the big ship climbed high above the English Channel. "From its very tone, with that talk of the mummy as a suspect, it was probably exaggerated. Scotland Yard may have the whole case solved by now."

Biff could not quite agree. He was sure that some prowler had locked him in the tomb, and until now, he had been inclined to suspect Montague, if only because of the antagonistic manner that the attendant had adopted. But now, with Montague himself a victim of some unknown attacker and under circum-

stances similar to Biff's, the mystery had definitely deepened.

"It is fortunate that Dr. Croft left London when he did," Uncle Charlie observed, looking down at the white-flecked blue of the English Channel. "By now, he is in Southern France. As for ourselves, I am glad you told me about the radio report before we changed planes in Madrid."

Puzzled, Biff asked why.

"Because Tangier is a refuge for international criminals," said his uncle, "or fugitives from justice. If Scotland Yard heard that we went straight from London to Tangier, we'd be bigger suspects than the missing mummy. We'll take care of that when we stop off in Madrid."

Within a few hours, Keene and the two boys were in the American Embassy in Madrid, where Biff's uncle made a detailed statement to an efficient under-secretary named Lundy.

"In Cairo, a few months ago," said Uncle Charlie, "I met a young engineer named Eric Yomer, who had been working on a new dam project on the Upper Nile above Aswan. Yomer had given up his job and was trying to persuade the Egyptian government to hold off the flooding of the Valley of Ghosts until a last search could be made for the legendary tomb of Prince Reth."

Lundy made notes of all that; then Keene went on:

"The Department of Antiquities in Cairo refused to listen. They said there was no proof that such a tomb had ever existed or that any ancient monuments

could be found in the Valley of Ghosts. I tried to convince them otherwise, for I knew about Professor MacGregor, and I had heard of Dr. Croft's excavations, but they wouldn't change their opinion. So I took it up with the Department of Natural Resources.

"I pointed out that the valley formed a route to the ancient Nubian gold fields and that gold might be found there. So they extended the time limit until mining surveys are completed. Meanwhile, we shall look for the Tomb of Reth, too."

"You are handling both operations?" queried Lundy.

"Yes," replied Keene. "I contacted my brother-in-law, Tom Brewster, a mining engineer of international reputation. He was leaving for a Mediterranean cruise with his family—all except Biff—so I cabled him that I would fly down from London and meet him when his ship reached Tangier."

"And Dad let me fly to London," put in Biff, "to join Uncle Charlie there. We connected with Chandra and brought him along."

Lundy noted all that; then suggested:

"Now tell me how you fit into this museum mystery."

Between them, Biff and Uncle Charlie detailed the events of the previous afternoon, winding up with the fact that the curator, Mr. Meadowbrook, had personally ushered them out and that they had seen Montague, asleep but alive, when they departed. Before they had finished their story, the telephone rang. It was the United States Embassy in London, returning a call that Lundy had put in earlier.

Lundy was on the telephone at least ten minutes, checking his report with the other end. As he concluded the call, he turned to his visitors and gave a satisfied nod.

"Our London Embassy talked to Scotland Yard," stated Lundy. "Meadowbrook has confirmed your story. He left the museum soon after you did, after awakening Montague and telling him to lock up. But when Meadowbrook arrived there earlier this morning, he found the museum open. Down in the cellar, he discovered the tomb closed and called the police. They opened it and found Montague in the inner vault. He is still unconscious, but is now expected to recover."

"And the mummy?" queried Uncle Charlie. "Has it shown up?"

"Not yet. This time it has really disappeared. Scotland Yard detectives are sure that a prowler was using Pattak's tomb as a hiding place, hoping to trap someone in the tomb."

Lundy checked a few minor points; then said:

"You still have time to catch the plane to Tangier. Keep in touch with our Embassy when you reach Cairo. If Scotland Yard has any questions, they will contact you there."

The hop to Tangier was short and interesting chiefly because it afforded an excellent view of the mammoth Rock of Gibraltar. After passing that famous landmark, the plane crossed the Strait and landed at Tangier, on the African Coast. Upon arrival, they went to a small hotel on the Avenue d'Espagne, left

their baggage there, and set out to see some of the sights of this rather curious city.

Tangier is built on hilly ground, and some of its streets are simply steep inclines for the benefit of pedestrians only. Though an African city, there were many Europeans there, and tourists were present in abundance. Tired by the plane trip and the excitement of the day, the boys soon had seen all they wanted. They dined with Biff's uncle at a picturesque sidewalk restaurant, which seemed a part of Paris, rather than Tangier, except for the passers-by, many of whom wore Moorish dress.

The patrons were all Europeans and Americans who gave quick, furtive glances at every newcomer. Some kept watching Biff's table, which rather worried him, as he wasn't quite over the shock he had experienced in the London museum. But he spoke calmly, when he said:

"It looks as if we are under constant observation, Uncle Charlie. Why should all these people be suspicious of us?"

"Because they are suspicious of everybody," replied Uncle Charlie, "even themselves. In the old days, when Tangier was strictly an international zone, they could get away with anything, from barefaced smuggling to banking swindles, with trifling sidelines like dope peddling and murder. When the zone came under the rule of Morocco, things began to change."

"For better? Or worse?"

"Both. New laws were passed, almost without notice. They weren't always enforced, but at any time,

they might be. Fugitives from other countries found that living in Tangier was becoming more costly—and less safe.”

Keene gave a slight wave of his hand to indicate that he meant the wary-looking café customers who were watching them.

“That sounds like the good side,” Chandra commented.

“Yes,” agreed Keene, “but there is a bad side, too. Little crooks, too small for the law to bother about, have begun to prey on big ones. Blackmail is common; and a fugitive who has fled his own country is apt to be kidnaped and taken back there bodily—for a price.”

“But isn’t kidnaping illegal everywhere?” asked Biff.

“It depends on what you call kidnaping.” Uncle Charlie smiled. “If a fugitive from justice wakes up in his own country, where he rightfully belongs, and can only say that he came from Tangier, where he shouldn’t have gone in the first place, they are not likely to ship him back to Tangier. Are they?”

“I guess not,” conceded Biff.

“Besides, they are getting stricter on many things,” added Keene. “Smuggling, swindling, various forms of robbery and violence, can be classed as piracy, if flight by sea or by air is involved. The chaps around here know that, and it worries them. Well, let’s finish dinner and get out of this den of pirates, so we can go back to our hotel where we will be safe.”

Dessert was being served as Charlie Keene spoke,

and Chandra beamed a knowing smile above his meringue glacé.

"Biff will be safe," he stated, "no matter where he goes."

Knowing Chandra's ways, Biff asked, "Why?"

"Because of that bug you are carrying," replied Chandra. "Look at those funny designs on it. Do you know what I think they say? I will tell you. They say: 'I am like the ring of Aladdin, that brings the genie when I rub it.' Go ahead, Biff. Rub the beetle and see what happens."

Biff studied the scarab and smiled.

"You have it wrong, Chandra," he said. "Those are not letters engraved on the scarab's back. They are just the natural markings of a beetle's wings, very fancy but very common. As for Aladdin, he didn't have a ring that he rubbed. He rubbed a magic lamp."

"Wait, now!" put in Uncle Charlie. "You are forgetting your *Arabian Nights*, Biff. Aladdin did have a ring that he rubbed first. That brought a genie, the Slave of the Ring, who told him about the wonderful lamp that brought a bigger genie, the Slave of the Lamp."

"I remember now," Biff nodded, "and Aladdin needed the genie's help because he was imprisoned in a cave where his bad old uncle had lured him. Like the Tomb of Reth in the London museum."

"So that makes me the bad old uncle!" Uncle Charlie laughed. "Well, since I found a way to open the tomb and get you out of it, I'm a good genie, too. That should square accounts."

"Except that I don't have a magic lamp," Biff reminded him, "nor even a magic ring. Just a golden scarab with ruby eyes, which probably won't bring a genie. I only hope it will keep things like that away from me, such as Pattak's living mummy."

They reached the little hotel and Uncle Charlie went into the manager's office to pick up any mail that might have come from London by a late plane. Biff and Chandra continued on up to their room, which was reached by a stairway.

The room was only on the second floor, but it opened through a pair of doors to a narrow, iron-railed balcony, which was at least thirty feet above the tropical shrubbery and well-trimmed orange trees below. This was due to the steep slope on which the hotel was built, and which descended toward the harbor.

The boys stepped out to the balcony for a breath of air and a view of the glittering scene below. There, Biff pointed to the right, where the balcony ended in an iron rail. Another balcony began a few feet beyond, extending past the next hotel room, which was dark.

"That's Uncle Charlie's room," Biff told Chandra. "I'm going to climb over there and give him a surprise when he comes in."

"Keep scarab safe!" warned Chandra. "Then no harm can come—and you can't fall, either!"

Biff laughed, then boosted himself to the balcony rail and over to the next one, clearing the space with ease. After landing lightly, Biff pulled the open collar of his white shirt up over the top of his head and but-

toned it under his chin to improvise an Arabian head-gear. With Chandra watching and chuckling, Biff stole forward to take his place outside the balcony doors of the other room, where he knew that Uncle Charlie would turn on the desk lamp the moment he entered.

Biff wasn't a moment too soon. The lamp clicked and flashed on, just as he reached his position. Without an instant's hesitation, Biff whammed both doors violently inward, sprang into the room and wheeled about, sweeping his arms wide as he fancied a genie would. Contorting his partly shrouded face, Biff bel-lowed in a hollow voice:

"Hi, Slave of the Ring! I am the Slave of thy Lamp! I have come because—"

Biff didn't go on to specify the reason for this surprise visit. As a fake genie, he was no match for the incredible creature that he faced!

It wasn't Charles Keene who had turned on the light. Beside the desk stooped a white-swathed figure, with sharp, boring eyes that peered from beneath wide, jet-black brows, and whose lips wore a sphinx-like smile.

Biff had last seen that face when it leered at him through the crack of the closing wall that had sealed Biff in the replica of the tomb of Reth in the cellar of a London museum.

The face of Pattak, the Tomb Builder!

CHAPTER V

Trouble in Tangier

WHETHER "Pattak" was ancient or modern, living or dead, one thing was certain. The white-robed intruder preferred darkness to light. That had been demonstrated in London. It was proven again, here in Tangier. With a sudden intake of breath that sounded like a snake's sharp hiss, the robed figure yanked the lamp clear from its cord, plunging the room into blackness.

The sweep of the white-robed arm warned Biff that a swing would follow, so he dived low in the dark. The lamp went high above his head, hit the wall by the balcony door and shattered, glancing off Biff's shoulder on the rebound. Biff grabbed it up as an improvised weapon and swung it blindly ahead of him as he rushed toward the door to the hallway, the direction he was sure that "Pattak" had taken.

There was one thing that Biff had learned in tight spots such as this; that was never to hesitate when a foe was on the run. On the enemy's own ground, it was different. Then, there might be danger of a trap.

But that wasn't likely, here in Uncle Charlie's room. If Biff could reach the hallway ahead of this man who posed as Pattak, he would have the "mummy" in the light, the very thing the intruder wanted to avoid.

As Biff reached the door, it suddenly flew inward. An instant later, Biff was tangling, not with "Pattak," but with Uncle Charlie, who had arrived in the midst of the commotion and was rushing in to learn the cause. Keene grabbed for the lamp that Biff was clutching and Biff had to tussle briefly until his uncle learned who he was.

Keene was quick to recognize his nephew, but by then, "Pattak" had doubled back in the dark and was diving out through the doorway to the balcony. Biff saw his white-clad figure and shouted, "There he goes!" That was confirmed, almost instantly, by an excited cry from Chandra on the balcony outside the next room.

The white form vanished as Biff reached the balcony with Uncle Charlie close behind him. Chandra was clambering over the side rail from next door, swinging on one hand like a monkey and pointing down over the outer rail.

"I can see him!" the Hindu boy exclaimed. "He's sliding down a rope! Come on, we can still catch him!"

Biff couldn't see "Pattak," but he could see the rope that Chandra meant, because it was a double one that came up and passed between the thin posts of the balcony railing, at the bottom; then down again, just past the corner post. Chandra must have been so busy

watching "Pattak" that he didn't notice that the rope was sliding, too.

Just as Chandra was dipping down to grab the rope, it was double no longer, for one end had popped into sight. Biff dived half across the balcony rail to drag Chandra back as the rope end slithered past the post and dropped away entirely. It was while pulling Chandra to safety that Biff gained a last fleeting glimpse of "Pattak's" white-robed form, plunging deep into the tropical shrubbery.

Keene, by then, was yanking both boys back into his room, while voicing a warning of his own:

"There are others down there with him! I can see their flashlights off in the bushes. Let's get around and try to head them off!"

Excitement spread to the hotel lobby when Charlie Keene arrived there, brandishing an automatic that he carried, with the boys close behind. Keene's brief announcement that they'd surprised a thief in his hotel room, was enough. An alert clerk and two hotel guests grabbed up heavy sticks to aid the chase, while the manager rushed to the street door and shouted for police.

The clerk led the way down a stairway to the basement where they roused a sleepy chef who followed along after them. Then they reached a sub-basement below that and fanned out through the garden, looking for the intruder and his crew. But by then, they all were gone, as was evidenced by an open gate leading to steep steps that continued down between two buildings to the next street.

Keene and the boys came back to a spot beneath the balcony, where they found the rope that "Pattak" had used. Biff looked at one loose end, stared puzzled up toward the balcony, and then turned to Chandra.

"You talked about the rope trick when we were in India," Biff reminded him. "The one where one end of the rope goes up into the air and stays there so that you can climb it. Maybe that's the way this fellow got up to the balcony."

"Maybe," Chandra grinned, "and maybe not. Look."

Chandra picked up the other end of the rope. A thin string was tied to the end of it, and at the other end of the string was a stone. Chandra threw the stone at an upward angle. It clattered in between the rails and out at the side, then dropped down, bringing the long string with it.

"Now I show you rope trick," announced Chandra, with a bow. "Stand back, way back, by bush."

Biff obliged, and Chandra began singing a weird Hindu tune, meanwhile pulling the string, which could not be seen against the darkened building wall. But the thicker, whiter rope crept upward sneakily, uncannily, as though it were rising of its own accord. Biff laughed while Chandra continued the act, keeping his hands behind him as he pulled the string that brought the rope along. The rope end wiggled through the rail and kept on down again.

"Better than the Indian rope trick," declared Chandra. "Jinnah Jad should see this. Rope goes up and then comes down again, like cobra."

There was still more rope when the first end reached the ground. Charles Keene pulled the loose end and found that the rope slid easily around the smooth iron rail posts, high above.

"Like a pulley," declared Keene. "That's why the thief needed a couple of helpers. They drew down the first end of the rope to haul him up on the other. Then they paid it out as he slid down."

"And when he reached the ground," added Biff, "he pulled the long end so the short end came up and around and then dropped clear away."

"That's when you saved me from dropping down with it," put in Chandra. "I thought rope was double all the time. But it's safe now, Biff. Want us to pull you up on it?"

"No, thanks," rejoined Biff, a bit grimly. "It's all right for a living mummy like 'Pattak' to risk his neck, but I don't want to be a dead duck."

"'Pattak'?" queried Keene. "You mean Pattak, the Tomb Builder? How does he figure in this business, Biff?"

"Very much," stated Biff. "The man I surprised in your room had the face of Pattak. Either he was the old Egyptian himself, or he was Pattak's twin brother."

Keene studied his nephew in a half-incredulous, half-worried manner. He soon saw that Biff wasn't joking, and that worried him still more. Apparently, he was wondering whether Biff was still suffering from the shock of his London experience, or whether he had gotten a touch of sun in Tangier, this afternoon.

"I tell you it was Pattak," insisted Biff, "or his double. I saw him in the light, Uncle Charlie, face to face. You only saw his back in the dark." Biff turned to Chandra. "Did you see his face on the balcony?"

"I saw your face," replied Chandra, "when you had your head all wrapped up." Chandra gestured to Biff's shirt, which had been torn in the struggle. "Maybe you saw yourself in mirror, same time you meet thief in next room."

"Listen, I'm not kidding," asserted Biff, "even if both of you are—"

Biff halted, realizing that nobody was kidding anybody. Uncle Charlie put a prompt end to the discussion.

"Let's drop it for tonight," he said. "Tomorrow, the *Helvetia* will be coming into port. We'll talk it over with your father."

The *Helvetia* was the cruise ship bringing Biff's family. Biff was willing enough to abide by Uncle Charlie's decision. On other occasions, when strange events had raised odd issues, Biff had found that an outside opinion often could put matters in their proper perspective. In this case, the "outsider" would be Biff's own father.

They went back up to Uncle Charlie's room, where he found all his papers safely stowed in the drawer where he had locked them. When the boys went to their own room and were turning into bed, Chandra said apologetically:

"You know, Biff, I didn't see the man's face. He was all in white, like mummy would be. But it was

dark outside window and on ground below."

"So let's forget it," said Biff sleepily. "Until tomorrow."

Next morning, Keene took the boys to a bank in Tangier, where he put his valuables in a safe deposit box.

"They are better there," he decided, "than in the hotel safe, if only for a day or so. There's no doubt in my mind that the thief was after those maps and other papers that Mr. Meadowbrook gave me at the museum."

Biff smiled at that. He smiled still more, that afternoon, when he saw a London newspaper that reached Tangier by airpost. The mummy of Pattak was still missing, and so far, no human suspects had been found to account for the attack on Montague, who was recovering but slowly.

Though the *Helvetia* was not due until early evening, Uncle Charlie suggested that they visit the waterfront to while away the remaining hours. They did so, and the boys found the scene fascinating. Big cranes were unloading all types of shipments, including automobiles which had been ferried from Gibraltar and whose owners were hoping would not be dropped between the ship and the dock.

Such anxiety was understandable, considering the careless, almost defiant attitude of the men along the docks. Never had the boys seen such nondescript characters, and Biff even commented that the Calcutta waterfront looked like a picnic ground in comparison. Chandra grinned and agreed.

Charles Keene overheard this and nodded.

"Don't look now," he said, "but just to our right is a pair that might date back to the Barbary pirates, or even to the Vandals, centuries before that."

The boys gave side glances and saw two men who looked as villainous as they were colorful. One was a big, broad-faced man wearing a skullcap that looked like a worn-out fez. He had baggy trousers, a blouse of an outlandish purple hue, and coin earrings that matched the glimmer of gold in his grinning teeth. He was seated on a big crate, toying with a length of rope, looping it between both hands while he talked to his companion, who stood by.

The other man was tall, longer of jaw and darker of complexion. He was wearing an ill-fitting sailor's outfit, consisting of grimy white pants and faded blue blouse that looked as though they had been stolen from the duffle of two different navies. He had a knotted red bandana on his head, and he kept brushing it back from over one eye as he gestured toward a ladder leading down to an old but rakish cabin cruiser that was berthed beside the dock.

"Tangier has been the crossroads for countless races," Uncle Charlie said. "You might see types belonging to the ancient Romans"—he and the boys now were looking away from the villainous pair—"or the even more ancient Phoenicians—"

"Or the still more ancient Egyptians!" Biff interrupted triumphantly. "Like the man I'm looking at right now—Pattak, the Tomb Builder!"

During those moments, Biff had been studying a

figure attired in white Moorish costume, who glanced Biff's way when he heard the name "Pattak." Swiftly, the man raised a white sleeve across his face, then turned to dart away.

Uncle Charlie and Chandra were both nearer to the man in white than was Biff. They turned in the direction of Biff's point, and they saw the man's action. Uncle Charlie was a moment too late to recognize the fugitive's face, but Chandra's quick look was in time. Like Keene and Biff, Chandra had seen the painted mummy case in the London museum and remembered its piercing eyes, broad brows, and contemptuous lips.

"Biff is right!" exclaimed Chandra. "It is Pattak!"

"Then what are we waiting for?" Uncle Charlie exclaimed, beckoning to the boys as he started forward. "Come on, while we can still catch up with him!"

Chandra came on, but Biff didn't. In fact, Biff never even got started. He was caught flat-footed, by a loop of rope that came lashing down from above his head and whipped straight across his throat as he started his forward stride. The broad-faced man with the gold earrings then gave a powerful tug that carried Biff choking, gargling, back across the stacks of crates, where he hit his head with a hard jolt and plumped limply into the arms of the tall, long-jawed man.

A moment later, the villainous pair had dropped from sight down the ladder to the waiting cabin cruiser, carrying their unconscious burden with them!

CHAPTER VI

The Pirate Crew

DURING their chase of the man who looked like Pattak, Uncle Charlie and Chandra never looked back, not even once. If they had, they would have lost sight of the fugitive, for here in the broad daylight of the Tangier waterfront, he was almost as elusive as he had been in the darkness of the hotel shrubbery.

Despite the encumbrance of his Moorish dress, the man kept ahead of his pursuers, but it was obvious that they would soon overtake him. Both Uncle Charlie and Chandra were wearing shorts and rubber-soled shoes, which were all to their advantage; and at times, they covered three strides to the fugitive's two.

The man with the mummy's face offset that by changing course in frequent, efficient fashion. The dock was literally alive with natives selling fruit, souvenirs, and other wares, as well as guides and cab drivers, all eager to catch the tourist trade. The pretended Pattak threaded his way in and out of this

motley mob with uncanny skill, leaving the path temporarily blocked behind him.

The native peddlers helped the man's flight by pressing in front of Charlie Keene and Chandra, offering them oranges and picture postcards, or gabbing about the sights of Tangier. Keene shoved them aside, and soon he and Chandra were hard on the trail again. They managed to keep the man in sight, because he made the repeated mistake of looking back. Each time he did, Keene and Chandra clearly recognized the face of Pattak, the museum mummy.

"You were right, Biff!" Keene called back, thinking his nephew was right behind him. "Keep an eye on the fellow. I'll tell you when to go after him!"

They were away from the waterfront now, and the right time came when they neared a marketplace where native merchants were bargaining over their wares. Pattak's pace was slowing. There was a desperate glare in his sharp eyes as he glanced back at the pursuers, now only a dozen feet behind him. Keene called quickly:

"Now, Biff! Tackle him!"

It wasn't Biff who darted forward, it was Chandra. The Hindu lad imitated one of the hard, driving tackles he had seen Biff make; but his try was short, his clutch late. The robe whisked past Chandra's fingers as Pattak made a swift, tremendous whirl and sprang off in another direction, leaving Chandra sprawled on the paving.

By the time Uncle Charlie helped Chandra up, they were confronted by a white-robed figure, but it wasn't

Pattak's. One of the merchants blocked their path. Beyond him were others, all turning angrily upon these invaders who had interrupted their business.

Pattak wasn't among them. This was a Moorish market where dozens of men were wearing attire like Pattak's own. Lost amid the throng, he was forcing his pursuers to retreat or accept the blame for creating a disturbance.

Losing Pattak was bad enough, but losing Biff was worse. Both Uncle Charlie and Chandra were totally amazed by their companion's disappearance. Returning to the dock, they kept looking for Biff along the way, without result. Pursing his forehead, Chandra suddenly announced:

"*Now* I know why Pattak kept looking back! He wanted us to stay on trail and keep watching him, so we would forget Biff."

"That was it!" exclaimed Keene. "And he used those tactics from the very start of the chase."

"Except first he was hiding face with arm," Chandra reminded him. "So that would not make sense—unless it was a signal."

"To those two ruffians I pointed out!" They were at the dock now, and Uncle Charlie was scanning every face in sight. "They must have grabbed Biff and taken him somewhere."

Just where was the question. As Charlie Keene looked up at the towering town, he realized that the search might be a long one. A glance at the harbor, with its hundreds of craft from odd-rigged sailboats to launches, yachts, and oceangoing freighters indi-

cated that the hunt might prove still longer.

"We'll have to take this up with the police," Biff's uncle told Chandra. "Otherwise, wherever Biff is, I'm afraid this is one jam he will have to get out of by himself"—Keene's tone turned grim—"if at all!"

At that precise moment, Biff could very well have been repeating that same statement. Biff had come back to consciousness gradually, but he was still half dazed. His head was throbbing and tossing in a slow-motion way. And soon, Biff realized that these sensations were not merely imaginary.

Actually, he was hearing the throb of an idling motor and the tossing came from waves, for when Biff opened his eyes he saw that he was in the cabin of an old motor cruiser. Through the portholes, Biff could see the light blue sky alternating with the purple of the wave-tufted sea, as the line of the horizon slowly rose and sank.

The cabin was as squalid as a rat's nest, and presiding over it were the two piratical characters from the Tangier dock. The man with the broad, gleaming face was at the left, his earrings dangling beneath his tawdry fez. The long-jawed fellow in sailor's costume and red bandana was lounging at the other side of the cabin, and the two were jabbering in a language that was meaningless to Biff, except for occasional words that sounded like French, Spanish, Italian, or even Greek.

This was a Mediterranean dialect, spoken by fishermen and smugglers, as well as sailors who plied the great inland sea. Civilizations had come and gone

along the shores of the Mediterranean, but this waterfront jargon had persisted, changing gradually through the centuries, but never losing its common touch.

About all that Biff could learn from this chatter was that the man with the fez and the earrings was named Blasco, while the long face beneath the bandana belonged to Casimir, as its owner was called. Soon, Blasco noticed that Biff was studying them and he relayed the news to Casimir. The two promptly switched to English.

"So! He is awake now," said Blasco. "He better not make trouble, or we will give him this!"

Graphically, Blasco drew his right hand across his throat, then shifted his hand to the handle of a big knife that was tucked inside his sash.

"Or this," added Casimir coolly. He drew a revolver from his pocket, showed it, and replaced it. "Then overboard"—he made a throwing gesture with his hands—"and *pouf!* He gives us no more trouble."

Biff tried to find his voice, but couldn't, for his throat still hurt from the pull of Blasco's rope. The boy swallowed hard a few times, then managed to say:

"If it's trouble you two want, you've already found it. You're in a peck of it."

"A peck?" Blasco turned to Casimir. "What is a peck?"

"Like birds make." Casimir tapped his right forefinger against his left wrist, with quick repeats. "So, you think we are foolish, like birds?" He was addressing Biff now. "Just why?"

"Because anyone is foolish who deals with Pattak."

"Pattak? Who is he?"

Evidently the name wasn't known to Casimir, so Biff tried another tack.

"Both of you were seen and recognized last night," he declared, "while you were helping in a hotel robbery on the Avenue d'Espagne. That is why my uncle pointed you out today. By now, he has notified the police."

Biff scored a hit with that statement, but it did not help. From their grins, it was apparent that Blasco and Casimir were indeed the men who had flashed those lights down in the hotel garden and were therefore Pattak's accomplices, whether they knew him by that name or not. But Biff's mention of the Tangier police was an empty threat.

"Why should we care about Tangier police?" quizzed Blasco. "They did not stop us from taking you away."

"And wherever we take you," added Casimir, "we will get paid there. Enough so we never go back to Tangier again."

Through Biff's mind flashed some of his uncle's statements about the laxity of the law in Tangier. That gave him a quick idea which he shot in the form of a query:

"And where will you find a place that is safer than Tangier?"

"Anywhere," retorted Blasco, "is safer for us."

"You think so?" Biff cleared his throat, then rubbed the back of his head, which still seemed to echo the

throbbing of the motor. He would have to play it smart now. "I have news for you both. Tangier is the only place you can go."

Sneers were the answer of the piratical pair. It was Casimir who snapped, "You think you talk us into taking you back to Tangier? You must be foolish."

"I would be foolish if I wanted that," agreed Biff. "Because in Tangier, you could fix things. You could say you grabbed me by mistake, or just in fun, or any other lie you might want to tell. It would be hard to prove much against you, particularly if you released me. But the moment you go outside these waters"—Biff gestured to the portholes and the now distant shoreline—"you will be guilty of piracy on the high seas!"

That stumped them for the moment. Then Blasco's gleaming grin turned into a vicious leer.

"Bah!" he spat. "Plenty of times we have taken people from Tangier and dumped them someplace else!"

"Criminals, yes," returned Biff, taking another leaf from Uncle Charlie's notebook. "Wanted men, who had no right to be in Tangier in the first place. But not an ordinary visitor, an American citizen like myself!"

Biff's vehement outburst brought new throbs to his head, and from the glares the pirates gave him, he realized that he'd talked too much.

"We will settle that!" snarled Blasco. "We will dump you where nobody will ever find you."

He was drawing the big knife from his belt, and Biff braced himself for a struggle, thinking that the blade would soon be slashing at his throat.

"We will kill you," Blasco threatened, "and throw you overboard—"

The drawn blade was jabbing in Biff's direction, when he was saved by a man who temporarily became his ally—Casimir.

"Not yet, Blasco," argued Casimir, grabbing his companion's knife hand. "Wait until we get out there!"

Reluctantly, Blasco agreed that would be wiser and put his knife away. Biff put up a new argument of his own.

"Whether I'm dead or alive won't matter," he reminded them. "My uncle knows by now that you two snatched me from the dock. Once they catch up with you, the charge will be the same: piracy. They will hang you both for that."

The words impressed the pair, but not exactly as Biff had hoped. From the looks they exchanged, they could probably be hanged for a lot of their past misdeeds. However, it did give Biff a brief respite.

"Until dark," decided Casimir, "we wait here. Then we do as Blasco wants, unless a boat or plane starts out from shore. Then we get rid of you right away. With nobody here to see it happen, what can they prove against us?"

Through the porthole, Biff could see that they were at least five miles from shore, without another boat near. Sails of fishing craft showed in the distance, but

they could never help. Casimir's mention of a plane had given Biff's heart a hopeful thump, but from the way both men were scanning the shoreline, they would be sure to spot the flash of rising wings against the setting sun. They would have plenty of time to carry out their threat before a search plane circled this far, as there were dozens of other old cabin cruisers much closer to the shore. And a plane would almost surely look them over on the way.

Biff's only hope was that for some reason, these pirates still regarded him as worth more alive than dead. But it did not seem so when Blasco gestured toward the door leading up to the low deck.

"Door wide open," Blasco said. "Run on out and jump off. Save us trouble of throwing you overboard."

"And with nobody to see it happen," added Casimir, grinning, "they would believe us if we tell our story in Tangier."

Both men resumed their watch through the portholes toward the shore, confident that Biff would never accept their challenge. If he did jump and try to swim for it, a few shots from Casimir's revolver could end that effort. All that this pair feared were witnesses; otherwise, they would stop at nothing.

Biff, looking out to the open sea through the opposite porthole, blinked suddenly in the glare of the sunset, which with all its beauty was still a grim reminder that time was running out. A moment later, he sprang to his feet with a defiant shout. Both pirates turned in time to see him bounding up the short steps to the deck, in bold acceptance of their threat!

CHAPTER VII

A Strange Visitor

BIFF was a few jumps ahead of the two pirates when he reached the top of the companionway. That was enough for the moment. Neither of the pair had time to draw a weapon before Biff was out of sight. But they made up for that quickly enough. Blasco had his knife in hand, Casimir his gun, as they bounded up the steps.

By then, Biff was climbing a ladder up to the deck above the cabin, which was as far as he could go. His pursuers followed, and Blasco, first to get there, came pouncing forward, intent on trapping Biff near the bow. This wasn't too easy, considering the way the drifting cruiser bobbed; and Biff, dancing from one side to the other, kept Blasco shifting back and forth.

Casimir now was on the deck, motioning and shouting for Blasco to get out of the way. Casimir wanted to aim his gun at Biff, but Blasco insisted on delivering a knife thrust first. Even if it missed, Biff would have to go overboard to avoid it.

Right then, the pair were revealing their murderous

intent; and that suited Biff. At the tip of the bow, he pointed to starboard, the one direction where neither pirate had so far looked. As if to humor him, they turned, Blasco with raised knife and Casimir with leveled gun as Biff shouted triumphantly:

"So you don't want witnesses! Well, you've got them! Plenty of them! Look!"

They looked and halted, frozen. Looming gigantic above them, dwarfing their boat to the proportion of a toy, was the vast bulk of a mighty ocean liner, its rails lined with witnesses in the form of passengers and crew, hundreds of them!

That was what Biff had seen when he blinked at the sunset through the porthole, the 25,000-ton *Helvetia*, inbound to Tangier, bearing down upon the tiny pirate craft. Blasco and Casimir had been looking the other way, unaware of the liner's approach, so Biff had taken that opportune moment to make what seemed a mad, hopeless dash from the cabin.

Now, the surprise was complete. Angry at the way Biff had tricked them, the pair turned upon him savagely, Blasco flinging his knife toward the bow and Casimir blasting with his gun. But again, Biff was away ahead of them. He was diving overboard as Blasco threw the knife. He was hitting the water as Casimir fired his first wild shot.

By then, the towering *Helvetia* was blocking out the sun entirely, and the clang of bells told that the cruise ship's mighty engines were being reversed, while the crew was lowering a rescue boat. Frantically, Blasco and Casimir jumped down from the deck,

sped up their idling motor and sent their rakish craft rolling, pitching through the huge waves from the *Helvetia's* wake as they raced out to the open sea.

Biff had purposely dived deep to avoid Casimir's shots, and he stayed under as long as he could hold his breath. As he surfaced, Biff saw the pirate craft bouncing off in flight, and he waved his arms to the men in the *Helvetia's* lifeboat, which was being lowered from its davits. Soon Biff was fished from the water and taken on board the mighty cruise ship, where he received an enthusiastic and excited welcome.

All the Brewster family were there—Biff's father, his mother, and the twins, Ted and Monica, who were five years younger than Biff. When asked how he had come to be on the little boat, Biff smiled and tersely remarked, "I was kidnaped by pirates, that was all." Then, promising to give more details later, Biff went below, where a cabin steward already had a change of dry clothes waiting for him.

The details came out after the *Helvetia* docked in Tangier, where Charles Keene and Chandra came on board to report Biff missing, only to find him there to welcome them. Police from the international zone checked Biff's story with the account already given them by Keene and Chandra. But the most telling testimony was that delivered wholesale by the passengers and crew of the *Helvetia*.

They had witnessed a real-life episode in modern piracy as a special but unscheduled feature of their Mediterranean cruise. Radio dispatches were sent to surrounding ports to pick up Blasco and Casimir, with

a description of the wanted pair and their craft. But there was no way of tracing the mastermind behind them.

Charlie Keene and Chandra could only say that they had followed a man whose face had reminded Biff of the hotel thief. But there was no proof that he was the same man; no actual link between him and the men who had grabbed Biff at the dock. As for mentioning that the suspect was the living counterpart of a mummy missing from a London museum, that would have brought only ridicule.

The *Helvetia* stayed in port overnight, and Charles Keene and the boys went on board as passengers. Cabins were available because some of the cruise passengers were taking side trips and were to rejoin the ship later. Since Dr. Croft wasn't due in Cairo for another week, it was better to book passage on the *Helvetia* instead of going by air.

That, Biff felt, was a grand idea. During the next five days, Biff, Chandra, and the twins had a continual round of fun, the sort that only a cruise ship could provide. They reveled in the big ship's swimming pools, both indoors and outdoors. They played exciting games on the towering sports decks and between times basked on the sun deck.

Food was the ship's most famous feature, and Tom Brewster exchanged smiles with Uncle Charlie when they watched the two boys and the twins demolish the cuisine. Once, Mr. Brewster gave a friendly warning.

"You won't get rations like those when we make

camp in the desert, boys," he declared. "You may as well eat heartily while you can, but don't complain later."

"Maybe we *have* been making a mistake," commented Biff. "After all, we've been eating like a couple of horses."

"Not like horses," rejoined Chandra. "Like camels. Eat food and store it up for long trip through the desert."

The cruise ship made one stop between Cairo and Alexandria. That was at the Isle of Malta, where Chandra, Biff, and the twins spent an exciting day visiting the ancient catacombs that had done double duty as air raid shelters during World War II. There was a cable waiting for Mr. Brewster at Malta, and Biff and Chandra were overjoyed when he revealed its contents.

"Kamuka is joining us in Cairo," Mr. Brewster stated. "He was due in New York the week after we started out on our cruise, so I left word that we would have a place for him if he could come."

Biff had first met Kamuka in Brazil, during their adventures surrounding the *Brazilian Gold Mine Mystery*. Later, he had accompanied Biff and Chandra when they faced the *Mystery of the Ambush in India*.

"Kamuka is accustomed to the tropics," added Mr. Brewster, "so I considered him from the start. He will be surprised, though, by the vast difference between the lush Amazon jungle and the dry Egyptian desert."

Each day, Tom Brewster and Charles Keene spent several hours going over the papers that Biff's uncle

had brought from London, as well as maps and other records pertaining to ancient Egyptian mines. At night, Uncle Charlie kept all these papers in his cabin, which connected with the one occupied by Biff and Chandra.

The door between was always open, and at night, someone stayed there constantly. In the early evening, it might be Biff's father or his uncle, or both. At other times, Biff and Chandra took turns. On the last night before reaching Alexandria, Biff and Chandra spent the evening on deck with Ted and Monica, while Charles Keene remained in his cabin.

That night, the Mediterranean was like glass, stretching off to an invisible horizon beneath the brilliant stars. Biff pointed out some of the more important constellations and told the stories of the legendary heroes which they represented. The twins were thrilled at hearing the Greek myths in the very setting where they had first been unfolded, centuries before.

All too soon, Biff's mother interrupted the proceedings, saying it was getting very late for Ted and Monica. When the twins voiced an objection, Biff settled the situation simply.

"I'm turning in myself," he said. "We may be docking early in Alexandria, and I want to be up by then. So good night, all."

By "all" Biff included Chandra, who didn't intend to turn in until after midnight, by which time Biff would be asleep.

Biff went down to his cabin and found Uncle

Charlie there, smoking his pipe and going over some papers.

"Hello, Biff," said his uncle, looking up. "I was working in here while the stewardess was making up my cabin. Since you're turning in, I'll take a walk on the promenade deck and clear some of my mental cobwebs."

Keene dumped his half-smoked pipe into a stand which stood beside him, and smoke curled up thinly. It was an old habit of his, to stop smoking abruptly, when other ideas intervened.

"I'll put these papers where they belong." He picked up the papers and carried them through to his own cabin. "Here in the top drawer of this chest, so you can keep an eye on them."

The chest was where Biff could see it from the bed in his own cabin. Uncle Charlie locked the papers in the chest drawer, left the light on, and went out through the door of his cabin, locking it behind him. Biff promptly went to bed and decided to get the early sleep he had planned. He wouldn't have to watch the other room, for he slept like a cat, and would be awake on the instant, if anything disturbed him.

Tonight, however, Biff couldn't sleep. He could smell the pleasing aroma of Uncle Charlie's pipe tobacco, the light in the next room kept bothering him, and the steady motion of the ship added to his wakefulness. Occasionally, he would begin to doze, only to rouse up with a half-start. The night was warm, the covers began to bother him, and he kicked them all off, with the exception of a sheet. He rested his eyes

on his forearm, to avoid the light from the next room; and gradually, he began to dream.

Strangely, Biff dreamed that he was a mummy. He was all wrapped and swathed as a mummy should be, and voices were whispering around him, talking about taking him back to his mummy case. One was saying, "We'll be in Alexandria tomorrow," and the other was echoing, "Yes, tomorrow." This, so it seemed, was happening in the very cabin where Biff slept.

Just to make sure, Biff opened his eyes. He quivered, as if from a sudden shock, for that mummy dream was all too real. Biff was unable to move his arms or legs, they were bound as in the dream. He was helpless, even raising his head and neck seemed impossible, no matter how hard he strained.

Frantically, Biff looked straight up into the light, his eyes wide, his lips unable to voice a cry. The light seemed to blur, then cloud, then shape itself into a rounded form. Biff gasped with real horror as he realized that he, a human being apparently turned into a mummy, was meeting one of his own kind.

For the rounded shape above him became a living face that was coldly gazing down into Biff's own. It was the face of Pattak!

CHAPTER VIII

The Man in the Courtyard

ALL the details of Pattak's dry, smooth features burned themselves into Biff's brain during those endless moments. Those eyes and brows were like charcoal etched on old yellow parchment, the lips a livid streak from a brush dipped in a crimson dye.

Those dark eyes glittered, the lips framed a faint smile as the face finally drew slowly away. And with that, the dream took on a still more fantastic note. Previously, in every meeting with Pattak, he had seemed like something ancient, returned to life, to furnish problems for Biff, a modern youth. Now, all that was reversed.

It was Biff who was ancient, bound helpless, tightly, like a mummy, actually feeling as though he had been in that plight for ages; while Pattak had gone strictly modern. Instead of an old Egyptian robe or Moorish garb of similar pattern, this man from the past was wearing a dark blue, pin-stripe suit, with a soft-collar white shirt and blue polka-dot tie. The points of a blue-bordered handkerchief poked from his breast

pocket. And as he drew back his sleeve, his cold eyes glanced downward at an ultra-modern wrist watch.

Then the immaculately groomed Mr. Pattak stepped away, and Biff saw that he was wearing white suede shoes as he stepped lightly, almost stealthily, through the doorway into the next cabin.

Slowly, deliberately, like a figure fabricated by Biff's dream, the blue-clad man opened the top drawer of the chest with a curiously shaped key. He brought out Charles Keene's papers and laid them beneath a table lamp, into which he screwed a special light bulb that he took from his pocket. In the suddenly brilliant glare, Mr. Pattak opened his blue coat, unhooked a strap that ran across his shirt front, and brought out a compact camera.

Click!

The sound was magnified in Biff's dream-tortured mind. Another *click!* and still another. The blue-clad visitor was using the camera in deliberate, efficient fashion, focusing it on one document after another beneath the glaring lamplight, laying each sheet carefully aside after he photographed it.

His work done, the modern Mr. Pattak turned off the table lamp, leaving only the much duller glow from the regular cabin light. He drew a pair of white gloves from his pocket and put them on as if he intended to go somewhere. To Biff, in his dream state, the process was painfully slow as Pattak squared Uncle Charlie's papers, put them in the drawer, locked it, and unscrewed the special bulb from the light.

All this was overtone by a clatter that seemed far

away. Pattak must have heard it, for his hand moved lazily to the switch controlling Keene's cabin light. It flicked off, plunging both cabins in darkness. Biff, still numb and motionless, stared toward the door of his own cabin, where a block of light now appeared from the passageway.

A new figure approached the bed, as though floating in that direction. Biff recognized the face and managed somehow to gasp the name, "Chandra!" Then the Hindu youth was beside him, shaking him, waking him. The light came on in the next cabin, and Biff saw his Uncle Charlie approaching, in that same strange, floating way. Chandra shook Biff harder and tugged at his shoulder.

"Wake up, Biff!" Chandra exclaimed. "You have had dream, maybe? Wake up, and I show you why. You are all wrapped up like mummy in bed sheet. No way for you to move!"

Chandra was right. Somehow, Biff had managed to roll himself into a veritable cocoon, which accounted for his inability to move his arms and legs. Even his breath had been stifled, hence the gasping. Now, as Chandra pulled the sheet completely clear, Biff found that he could move again, so he sat up and rubbed his head as Chandra turned on the light in their cabin.

"A mummy is exactly what I thought I was," Biff panted. "I was all wrapped up to go back into my pyramid, or more likely, the Tomb of Reth, because Pattak was in on it."

"Pattak?" queried Uncle Charlie quickly. "In here?"

"In my dream," corrected Biff. "But he had changed a lot. He looked like a modern businessman in a pin-striped suit."

"Go on. Let's hear the rest."

Biff gave all the details of his absurd, slow-motion dream and was surprised to find that his uncle took it seriously.

"I left the light on in my room, remember?" stated Keene. "It was out when I returned."

"I remember." Biff, too, had turned serious. "In my dream, it went out very suddenly."

"Pattak had to turn it out," decided Keene grimly. "Chandra was coming in the door of your cabin. I was coming in the door of mine. He must have slipped out while we were waking you up."

Keene went into his own cabin, unlocked the chest drawer and looked through the papers, promptly deciding that they were all there, though they seemed stacked a little differently. He then turned to the table lamp and felt it.

"There was no bulb in this lamp," he stated. "It burned out this afternoon, and I forgot to replace it. There is no bulb in it now, but the socket is hot. You say that Pattak put on gloves?"

Biff nodded.

"That was so he could unscrew the high-power photographic bulb that you saw him put there. Your dream was real, Biff."

"But it couldn't have been real," insisted Biff, "the way everything floated so crazily, so slowly."

Uncle Charlie went to the ashstand in Biff's room.

There he stooped and gave a suspicious sniff.

"That's not the aroma of my tobacco," he declared. "This is a sweeter odor, somewhat sickening, too." He indicated a wisp of yellowish smoke that still curled upward. "Look at that color! That's not from tobacco. Somebody must have placed some form of powdered drug in the ashstand before it was brought in here!"

Keene turned on the air conditioner, and soon Biff's head cleared completely, leaving no dizzy feeling whatever. Unquestionably it was the effect of the smoke that had numbed him and produced his dream-like state.

"I guess we can all turn in and get some real sleep," Uncle Charlie decided, a bit grimly. "Pattak, or whoever he was, has gotten what he came for, so he won't be back. My papers are still safe, even though he now has copies."

With morning, everyone was up, as the cruise ship approached the harbor of Alexandria, once dominated by a huge pharos, or lighthouse, which had rated as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Now, the minarets of many mosques, mingled with the skyline of a modern city, were the sights that attracted every eye, with the exception of those of Biff and his companions.

They were scanning their fellow passengers, looking for anyone resembling Pattak, whether in ancient or modern dress. But they had no luck. Somehow, the elusive Egyptian must have managed to reach shore unnoticed.

The cruise ship was laying over in Alexandria, so the entire Brewster party spent some time touring the city and visiting its beautiful beaches. Then they took the train to Cairo, a three-hour trip, where they went to the airport and met Kamuka when he arrived. Later, they reached the Alhambra Hotel, where they found Dr. Thaddeus Croft, the veteran archeologist and excavator, who had come by train and ship from London.

Eric Yomer, the young Nile engineer, was not expected until later, so there was no immediate need to discuss or plan the mining surveys so essential to the expedition. That left Mr. Brewster free to tour the city with Mrs. Brewster and the twins, the principal attractions being museums and mosques. When Ted and Monica heard that, they raised a howl of protest, which finally subsided when Mr. Brewster remarked that they would make a special trip to the Sphinx and the pyramids, as well.

For Biff and the other boys, a visit to the Egyptian Museum of Cairo was of prime importance, as there they would see tombs and relics—most notably those of Tut-ankh-amen—and gain a better perspective on Egypt's past. But that could wait for a few days. Right now, Uncle Charlie wanted the boys to sit in on a conference with Dr. Croft in his suite at the Alhambra, which overlooked a large, paved inner court, where guests were strolling among flowering plants that surrounded a shallow fish pond.

Dr. Croft was a ruddy-faced man with heavy jaws and beetle brows that narrowed when he frowned. His

burly build made him look overweight until he rose from his big chair and stalked about the room. Then his towering height of six feet seven inches seemed sufficient for his bulk.

It was easy to picture Croft as a hard driver when he headed an expedition. But his manner was friendly, his laugh frequent and hearty, except when he mentioned the Egyptian government. Then Croft's face went purple; his lips set hard.

"Rules and regulations!" he stormed. "Changing overnight. Red tape, thicker than a mummy's wrappings! That's the way it is today. What happened when this young chap Yomer wanted to excavate the Valley of Ghosts? 'We're flooding it,' they told him. 'There are no tombs or antiquities there.' As if they knew, these fat Cairo politicians, who have never even been up the Nile!"

"But the Department of Natural Resources listened," Keene reminded him, "when I proposed the mining survey."

"That makes it even worse," argued Croft. "You have to pit one department against another nowadays. You have to talk to ten men to get what you used to get from just one."

"Provided you paid him enough," Keene remarked. "They say that corruption and graft were the only rules before the old government was finally overthrown."

"That is true." Croft gave one of his hearty laughs. "How well I should know, for I paid often. But it was

worth it, to know you could go about an excavation project with no interference."

Dr. Croft eased into his chair and gave a narrow frown. "What do you make of that museum business, Keene? I mean that murderous attack on Montague, the day after I left?"

"Its probable purpose," returned Keene, "was to make us abandon our trip to the Valley of Ghosts."

"I don't understand. Montague was not coming with us."

"But my nephew is." Keene gestured to Biff. "He was trapped in that very vault, exactly the same way, late the day before."

Dr. Croft gave an incredulous stare. "Why, I never heard a single word about that!" he exclaimed.

"The newspapers did not hear about it," stated Keene, "but Scotland Yard has a full report. However, if anything should happen to Biff, his father naturally would give up any plans for a mining survey."

"And that would end our chance of making excavations," said Croft, with a worried nod, "since the valley would be flooded. I hope"—he beamed a broad smile at Biff—"that you have been avoiding danger spots since that experience in London."

"He hasn't exactly," put in Keene dryly, as Biff hesitated, a bit abashed. "Biff tangled with a hotel thief in Tangier, then was kidnaped by pirates at the dock, and finally was drugged in his stateroom on the cruise ship, while an intruder photographed all my documents."

"My word!" exclaimed Croft. "And who could be responsible for all those misadventures?"

"A man who is the perfect image of Pattak, whose mummy vanished from its case in the London museum."

"Are you joking, Keene?"

"Far from it."

Uncle Charlie began reciting further details but was interrupted by the arrival of Biff's parents and the twins, back from their trip to the Sphinx and the pyramids. Soon, Dr. Croft and Mr. Brewster were chatting by a window above the courtyard. Biff caught snatches of their conversation.

"I don't mind risks myself," Mr. Brewster was saying. "I've taken them all my life. But I don't want to put my family in danger."

"From what Keene tells me," remarked Croft, "your son Biff has had more than his share of danger recently."

"I know that," agreed Mr. Brewster, "although he's been through adventures before and has learned to take care of himself."

At this moment, the twins both grabbed Biff to tell him of their own adventures.

"Out near the pyramids we saw a lot of Bedouins," exclaimed Ted. "They wear white robes and live in black tents—"

"And they should be called 'bad ones' instead of Bedouins," interrupted Monica, "from the ugly looks I saw them give some people."

"We thought they would grab us," added Ted,

"and take us off into the desert on their camels, like those pirates took you out in the harbor on their boat."

"They call camels 'ships of the desert.'" Monica laughed. "So why not?"

Mr. Brewster turned to Dr. Croft. Both were smiling as they strolled away from the window.

"You see what I mean?" said Mr. Brewster. "The twins want to copy everything their big brother does. To them, all of Biff's adventures are simply fun." Mr. Brewster's tone turned serious, as he added, "They don't know how lucky Biff has been sometimes. It worries me, for some day they may jump right into danger themselves, with no one to pull them out. If anything even threatened Ted or Monica"—their father shook his head—"I think I'd give up this adventurous life."

Biff didn't hear any of that, because he was no longer nearby. As Dr. Croft and Mr. Brewster walked away, Biff stayed, restrained by a quick hand—Chandra's.

"Look down into courtyard," muttered Chandra, who was staring toward a far corner. "Not my way. Other way."

Chandra was looking to the left, so Biff looked down to the right. Without turning his head, Chandra said, "More to right. Now maybe a little farther away. Look quick now, very quick. You will see—"

Biff looked very quick and saw. A man in the baggy clothes of a street beggar was sidling out beneath an archway leading from the courtyard to the street. At the last moment, he turned, and his furtive look be-

came a sweeping glance, as he took in everything, even the window from which Biff watched.

Then the beggar was gone, but not before Biff recognized his face. It was Pattak!

CHAPTER IX

Adventure in Cairo

CHARLES KEENE noticed the flurry of excitement at the window and came over to ask the boys about it. When they told him what they had seen, Keene quickly suggested:

"Get down there and try to trace the fellow! I'll be along to help, if you run into any trouble."

While Biff's uncle was quietly relaying the news of Pattak's return to Mr. Brewster and Dr. Croft, Biff headed down to the courtyard, with Chandra and Kamuka close behind him. There, the boys hurried out through the archway and fanned in different directions when they reached the street. They were confident that at least one of them could catch a glimpse of Pattak somewhere in the immediate area.

But this was Cairo, not London; not even Tangier.

One man in an Oriental costume could have been spotted instantly. Even out of a few dozen, the boys might have singled out the man they sought. But the streets of Cairo were thronged with all varieties of costumes, and many men who were attired in Euro-

pean clothes were definitely Egyptian in appearance. If the pretended Pattak had shed his robe somewhere, he could have passed as almost anyone else.

Disappointed, the boys returned to the hotel courtyard where they were met by Biff's father and Uncle Charlie, both of whom decided that a further hunt for Pattak would be futile.

What really baffled Biff more than Pattak's disappearance was how Chandra had been able to tell Biff just where to look for the elusive mummy man.

"Up there at the window," Biff reminded him, "you were looking over there"—Biff pointed across the courtyard—"and you had me looking the other way, back toward the arch. Remember?"

Chandra smiled to show that he remembered, but Kamuka was much more vocal.

"I remember!" exclaimed the Brazilian boy. "I wonder about it, too. How do you see behind your back, Chandra?"

"Look over there," said Chandra, "and you see how."

A man in a long-sleeved Arab costume was squatted in the corner of the court, displaying some objects that looked like large drinking cups, while a few hotel guests looked on. Biff had noticed the man from the window of Dr. Croft's suite, but had given him no more than passing attention. Now, the man apparently caught Chandra's eye, for he juggled one cup, then another, as though in signal.

"Look over your left shoulder," Chandra told Biff. "That's right, but higher. More to the left, now. You

will see someone you know—wait! Two people you know!”

Biff saw them, Ted and Monica, looking down from Dr. Croft's window. Biff beckoned for them to come on down. Then he turned to look at the man in the corner and saw that he was jiggling two cups. Turning to Chandra, Biff exclaimed:

“So this man was watching Pattak and giving signals telling you where to look for him. But who is he? How did you make friends with him?”

“His name is Abu Bey,” replied Chandra. “He is an Egyptian magician. You remember how in India I worked for a street magician named Jinnah Jad, a *jadoo wallah*, they call him?”

“I remember.”

“Abu Bey is the same thing, only instead of being a *jadoo wallah*, like in India, here in Egypt, they call him a *gilli-gilli*. But he does tricks much the same as Jinnah Jad. That is how I make friends with him. Come over and you see.”

They went over to watch Abu Bey, and there the twins joined the three boys. Now that he really had a crowd, Abu Bey did marvels with the metal cups, three of them in all. He turned them upside down and made olives pass from beneath one cup to another, until he had six olives under one cup. Then, he vanished the olives one by one and calmly lifted the cups to show a tangerine orange under each.

All the audience gasped with the exception of Chandra, who regarded this as routine stuff. Then, his brown face wearing a broad, perpetual smile, Abu

Bay lifted the cups again, and from beneath each cup came a live yellow duckling. All three ducklings waddled over to a little fish pond and went swimming there.*

Next, Abu Bey took up the large, ornamental mat that was in front of him and slapped his hands a few times on the solid tiling of the courtyard. He formed the mat into a pointed cone about three feet tall and reached his hand beneath, placing a small flower pot there. Rising, he spread the mat and whipped it away, showing a three-foot flowering bush growing from the pot.

Abu Bey spread the mat and took a bow, while pleased hotel guests tossed coins on the mat in appreciation. After the small crowd strolled away, Chandra introduced his companions to Abu Bey. When the *gilli-gilli* heard Biff's name, he tilted his head and asked Chandra:

"This is the boy you say has the golden beetle?"

Chandra nodded and Biff, aware that the next move was his, produced the ruby-eyed scarab that Mr. Meadowbrook had given him. But when he extended it to Abu Bey, the *gilli-gilli* recoiled and withdrew his long-fingered hand as though afraid the scarab would bite him.

"Magic in golden beetle!" announced Abu Bey. "Good magic for you, but bad magic for me. With

* *Note:* This is the famous cups-and-balls trick in which Egyptian magicians have specialized for many years. The author will be glad to explain the trick to any reader who is interested.

me, maybe beetle come alive, like stick turn into *naja haje!*”

“*Naja haje?*” Biff repeated, and it was Chandra who interpreted the name.

“Abu Bey means snake,” said Chandra. “Egyptian kind, but similar to cobra in India. Abu Bey charms snakes, too.”

Biff’s father and uncle had strolled over in time to hear that. Uncle Charlie turned to Mr. Brewster with the comment:

“Probably we could use a man like Abu Bey on our expedition to the Valley of Ghosts.”

Abu Bey had hoped to hear that. Though afraid of golden scarabs, he had no qualms where snakes or ghosts were concerned. Earnestly, he expressed his willingness to join the party, and when Keene decided that he could come along, both Abu Bey and Chandra showed pleased smiles.

However, a more important decision had to be made that evening when the group met again in Dr. Croft’s suite. The boys listened glumly while Mr. Brewster spoke seriously of calling a halt to the whole thing.

“I have already said that I am willing to take any personal risk,” Mr. Brewster insisted. “But to put Biff and these other boys in danger—”

“If there is danger,” Uncle Charlie broke in, “it will be less because we are with them. Less, perhaps with us, than anywhere else. Don’t you agree, Dr. Croft?”

As Charles Keene turned appealingly to Dr. Croft, Chandra whispered to Biff:

"Better take tight hold of lucky beetle and make a big wish that we still can go!"

Mostly to please Chandra, Biff reached in his pocket and clutched the golden scarab. Oddly, its charm seemed to work, for while Dr. Croft hesitated, Mr. Brewster decided for himself.

"We'll proceed as planned but with caution," he stated, "once Mrs. Brewster and the twins are safely on the ship. They wanted to visit the bazaars in the Khan El Khalili tomorrow, but we'll have to call that off."

"But that tour was arranged by the cruise ship!"



exclaimed Uncle Charlie. "Those native bazaars thrive on tourist trade. Besides, the rest of us can go along to look out for them."

"Quite so," agreed Dr. Croft. "Nothing could happen to a party visiting the Khan El Khalili." He turned to Mr. Brewster and added, "However, to put your mind at ease, I shall have Farriel make a complete checkup of existing conditions there, and give us a precise report."

Farriel was Dr. Croft's secretary, a serious, methodical man whose eyes were as big and inquisitive as an owl's, as they stared through a pair of large,



round-rimmed glasses. In contrast to Dr. Croft, with his ruddy face and shaggy hair, Farriel had sallow features and was somewhat baldish. His wizened appearance made him look as old as Dr. Croft, though probably he was only half the doctor's age.

Always at Dr. Croft's elbow, Farriel kept taking notes in different languages and spent the rest of his time turning them into reports. He did this with the proposed trip to the bazaars. By morning, the patient, plodding secretary had a sheaf of papers a half-inch thick, from government officials, Cairo police, and merchants, all to the effect that the Khan El Khalili was one of the safest districts in the city.

That satisfied Mr. Brewster. The entire family set out for the eastern side of Cairo, accompanied not only by Chandra and Kamuka, but the methodical Mr. Farriel as well, since Dr. Croft decided that he could spare his secretary on this occasion. At the Musky, the principal avenue where the bazaar district began, they met the rest of the party from the cruise ship. Some thirty or forty in all, they soon were spreading out through the Khan El Khalili.

Here were narrow, crooked streets, where the balconies of ancient buildings seemed to climb toward one another overhead. In some places, canopies were spread from roof to roof, lessening the sunlight's glare and giving the street scene a splotchy effect, like something from a dream.

There were tiny holes-in-the wall that served as shops, and there were streets that represented different

trades: jewelers, goldsmiths, carpet makers, perfumers, woodworkers, and others. An aroma of spices pervaded the air, there were high-pitched calls of tradesmen praising their wares, and above all, the constant babble of bargainners, who could never seem to fix upon a price.

Visitors were jostled, but never purposely. It just seemed as though everyone was intent upon his business, small or large, leaving little chance for courtesy in the Khan El Khalili, except when tourists paused to watch native craftsmen at work in corners of marts devoted to that purpose. Members of parties were constantly getting separated from one another, only to come together around turns and corners or in the doorway of some tiny shop.

The only two who never did drift apart were Ted and Monica, for the Brewster twins were practically inseparable. In a narrow street they jumped apart when a donkey emerged from a little alley that was barely wide enough for the beast and its load, which consisted of nets, containing thin-necked earthen bottles, each about a foot in height.

Then, as the donkey balked, Ted reversed his jump and rejoined Monica on the near side. There, they were blocked again, as a native driver tried to tug the donkey forward, without result. The driver gave the twins an apologetic smile.

"Sorry donkey make trouble," he said in halting English. "Soon I make him go one way or other. Maybe he will back up."

"You mean down that alley?" queried Ted. "With all that load?"

"Often, he do that," the man assured the little boy. "Clear back to pottery shop, where we come from. Very interesting shop. You should see it."

The donkey apparently thought the same, for at that moment, it sidestepped, swishing its tail clear of the alleyway, which became a most convenient route. Ted turned to Monica:

"Let's go and see the pottery shop, Sis."

"It's better than staying here," agreed Monica, "especially when we don't know which way that donkey will turn next."

As the twins went down the alleyway, the donkey driver turned away to hide his broadening smile. Scarcely had Ted and Monica made a sharp turn at the end of the short alley when the driver gave a slight flick to the rope, and the donkey moved as promptly as if trained. In turning about, the beast disclosed a hinged metal gate, with heavy grillwork, flat against the wall that flanked the street.

The gate looked like a mere ornamentation until the driver reached it and swung it shut. Then it closed with a dull clang, and its big latch dropped automatically in place. With a dry chuckle, to which the donkey responded, the driver started down the winding street, with the pot-laden beast plodding along behind him and passers-by stepping aside to give them room.

Though Ted and Monica did not yet realize it, they were trapped in the heart of the Khan El Khalili, the "safest district in Cairo"!

CHAPTER X

In the Pottery Shop

ODDLY, that muffled clang of a forgotten gate could have found an echo in Biff's mind, even though he was not close enough actually to hear it. Ever since he had been trapped in the tomb in the cellar of the London museum, Biff had been alert to hunches. Now, one was growing upon him again.

Here, near a jewel mart in the Khan El Khalili, Biff had other things on his mind than Ted and Monica. From the moment they reached the Musky, Biff's brother and sister had taken over on their own, as they so often did. Even Mr. Brewster had forgotten his qualms, considering the size of the tourist party, the reports furnished by Farriel, and the constant contact between members of the group.

Briefly, however, that contact had been lost between the twins and the other members of the Brewster party. Biff hadn't realized it, for the reason that he halted in the jewel mart was to look at a turquoise necklace that he thought his mother would like.

Two ladies from the cruise ship were bargaining for the necklace, apparently unwilling to pay the

fairly low price asked by the bearded merchant who squatted behind his trays of cheap but attractive jewelry. Biff was sure he had enough money to make the purchase himself, so he reached in his pocket for his small roll of Egyptian currency.

For some unaccountable reason, Biff reached into the wrong pocket. Instead of Egyptian pound notes, he gripped the golden scarab. Biff remembered how Abu Bey had shied from it, and his own hand tingled at the chance recollection. That tingle produced a sensation of danger, and Biff looked quickly about, to see if anyone happened to be watching him.

No one was. All was peaceful in this mart, where the sun's rays, coming through an oddly shaped window, sparkled and flashed on the jewel trays. Everyone was intent on buying or selling, and the ladies from the ship had finally met the merchant's price. Voices were babbling all around, and the fact that Biff was literally lost in all this humanity was startling indeed. It made him wonder what had happened to the others in his party.

Instantly, Biff was mindful of the twins. Where were they and with whom? Turning, Biff started from the jewel mart, sidestepping people on the way. Outside, he bumped squarely into Kamuka and was momentarily gratified at finding someone of the party.

"Where are the twins?" Biff demanded. "Have you seen them?"

"No," replied Kamuka. "I was walking along with you, when suddenly, you were gone. I remember then

that we were passing jewel shop. So I come back to look for you."

"Then Ted and Monica aren't up ahead?"

"They could be. I saw your father talking to your uncle, outside a place with many rugs. Maybe twins go ahead of Mr. Brewster and Mr. Keene."

"If they did," decided Biff, "Dad and Uncle Charlie will be looking out for them. Come on, Kamuka, we're going back."

Back they started, and quickly, each boy studying the shops on his side of the winding street, so as to speed the process. In their excitement, they bumped into a man whose face was buried deep in a notebook. He looked up and blinked, while Biff gave an exclamation of recognition.

"Mr. Farriel! Have you seen Ted and Monica?"

The owlish secretary studied his notebook.

"They left Mrs. Brewster at the Street of the Perfumer to join Mr. Brewster and Mr. Keene in the Street of the Rug Maker."

Biff swung to Kamuka.

"That's where you saw Dad and Uncle Charlie! But the twins weren't with them."

"They may have come by another street," Farriel said, studying a map that he carried. "I am going there now, so I shall check. I shall then return or send someone to tell you."

"Good," decided Biff. "Meanwhile, Kamuka and I will continue to backtrack."

They parted from Farriel and in a few minutes ran

squarely into Chandra, coming up the same street. The Hindu boy was eager in his welcome.

"I've been looking everywhere for you," Chandra began. Then, his face clouding, he asked, "Is something wrong?"

"Ted and Monica are missing," explained Biff. "They must have stopped in some shop—"

"But in what shop and where?" put in Chandra. "I have been looking in all shops as I came along."

"Maybe you didn't look closely enough," rejoined Biff grimly. "You and Kamuka had better go back, a good way back, and look again, while you come this way. I'll work more slowly from this end and meet you on the way."

Chandra and Kamuka turned to follow Biff's instructions. Then, momentarily, Chandra paused, with a serious bit of advice.

"Keep tight hold of scarab," he told Biff. "Abu Bey may be right. Golden beetle bring you luck!"

Biff did clutch the scarab in his pocket as he studied the street shop by shop. Gradually, his fears dwindled, for he felt sure that the twins had simply stopped off to look at something that interested them.

In that guess, Biff was right, at least to a degree. Ted and Monica had found a place that intrigued them. Around the turn in the little alley, which was so narrow that they could just walk side by side, they had come to a large workshop into which the alley opened.

All about were tools of the potter's craft, consisting of wheels, baskets of earth, jars of water, and in one

deep corner, a kiln that looked like a huge oven reaching to the high ceiling of the room.

In the corner, by a potter's bench, sat an old man molding a vase. He looked up and gave the twins a withered, toothless grin as he cackled:

"You want to buy *qulla*? You look back there"—he gestured to a wide doorway—"and you find *qulla*. All kinds."

The *qullas* to which the old potter referred were the slender-necked water jars that had made up the donkey load. When Ted and Monica went into the back room, they saw dozens of such jars, varying in shapes and designs, stacked upon benches and shelves. Those were merely samples, for along the walls were great stacks of jars, set on their sides, like a massive honeycomb and arranged alternately so that the mouth of one jar was alongside the bottom of the next. This accounted for the solid, even way in which the stacks were formed.

Graceful though they were, the *qullas* were very cheap, for they were the common water jar used all along the Nile, and they were manufactured and sold by the millions every year. There were pots, too, of many varieties, but as Ted and Monica went deeper into the storage room, they began to express their disappointment at finding none over a few feet high.

"Remember Ali Baba's cave in the *Arabian Nights*?" queried Monica. "This place would be just like it, if only those pots were big enough to hide a crew like the Forty Thieves!"

"They'd have to be a lot bigger," returned Ted. "You couldn't squeeze a crew of midgets into these. There's another room though, through that doorway. Let's take a look in there."

Again, they were disappointed, for the pots in the inner room, though fancier in design, were no larger than the rest. But as they were turning to leave, Monica stepped over to a corner, to another stack, of irregular sizes, covered by wide strips of cloth.

"These look bigger," declared Monica, "and they must be something special, because they're covered with cloth to keep the dust off—"

"More likely the pots aren't dry yet," broke in Ted, in a warning tone, "so they don't want anyone to touch them. Be careful how you lift that cloth. Wait, I'll help you—"

As they lifted a cloth by opposite ends, the stack of pots came to life with it and shot upward, outward, with a sweeping motion that flung the twins backward, startled. Not only that, the surrounding cloths also came to life, dropping away like shrouds from human figures flanking the ones the twins had disturbed.

They didn't come from huge jars, like Ali Baba's thieves. Instead, they just sprang up from squatting positions. There weren't forty of them; there were only four, but that was four too many. For these lurkers were bronzed, brawny men in Bedouin attire, the very type that had given the twins an ugly eye on their visit to the pyramids, the day before.

The four men pounced upon the two helpless children!

CHAPTER XI

A Thwarted Rescue

THOUGH caught totally off guard, Ted and Monica gained a brief advantage. They were small, quick, and unencumbered by the heavy robes and draped head-gear worn by their attackers, who were also impeded by the cloth coverings under which they had been hidden.

Instinctively, the twins darted for the door, Ted pushing Monica ahead of him. In the workshop, the old potter—who was much more spry than he looked—sprang up to stop them, but they raced past him and out through the alley. Close behind were the men in Bedouin attire.

“Keep going, Sis!” Ted panted. “When we reach the street, they won’t dare follow us!”

Only they weren’t to reach the street. Monica halted with a gasp at the turn in the alley and a moment later, Ted plummeted into her. Both saw that their only outlet was blocked by a formidable iron gate, and

before they could decide what to do next, the choice was no longer theirs.

The "bad ones" had overtaken them. Still carrying the cloths that they had used to hide themselves, the robed men flung them like huge shawls, half-smothering Ted and Monica in their folds. Ted shouted, Monica shrieked. Then their cries were stifled by big hands pressing through the cloth. Still struggling, but weakening, the twins were dragged back into the pottery shop.

Soon, silence settled over the place, broken only by the rhythmic whir of the potter's wheel.

There had been time for only one brief call for help, but it was heard, though vaguely. Out in the street, Biff Brewster, working his way from one shop to another, halted with a worried frown. Above the babble of the bazaar and the numerous street cries, he was sure he had heard the voices of Ted and Monica.

Oddly, his brother's shout had blended with his sister's shriek. And Biff, realizing that his nerves were tense, was ready to charge it off to imagination. It didn't make sense, one drowning out the other in such strange fashion—or did it? Again, Biff began looking into the little shops, drawing suspicious glances from their proprietors, as he studied the counters, the walls, even the floors, wondering if they had hiding places.

One spot repeatedly attracted Biff. It was near a perfume shop just opposite a wrought-iron gate. It suddenly struck Biff that if the calls had come, not from the shop, but from beyond the gate, they would nor-

mally have had a distant sound. If so, they could have been very real and not mere imagination.

On the strength of that, Biff went to the gate, unlatched it, and stepped through, finding himself in a very narrow alley that ended in a sharp turn. As he started to explore the blind passage, the gate clanged shut behind him, swinging of its own weight. Biff realized he should have opened it wider, for when he tried it, the gate was latched on the street side, and the grill was too small for him to reach through.

Grimly, Biff was reminded of the Tomb of Reth in London, and how he had been trapped there; but this was by no means so grueling an ordeal, even if danger did lie ahead. As for danger, Biff had the cure for that, the golden scarab in his pocket, something he hadn't been carrying during that experience in London. With an indulgent smile, Biff reached in his pocket, found he still had the metal beetle, and let it stay there, while he followed the alley.

Past the turn, Biff found the potter's workshop. The old potter looked up from his wheel and gave a gesture:

"You come to buy *qulla*? You find plenty *qulla* back there. All kinds."

Biff went into the storage room, where a mere glance at the walls would have been enough to satisfy him ordinarily. But keyed up as he was now, Biff was ready to take a chance on anything. He fancied he saw a slight stir in a pile of cloth in a corner, so he sprang over and snatched it up.

There, bound and gagged, lay Ted and Monica, looking up with helpless eyes that brightened as they saw Biff. In a moment, Biff had the gags free and was working on the ropes that held the wrists and ankles of the prisoners, while Ted and Monica gave encouragement in excited whispers.

"Hurry, Biff!" exclaimed Ted. "Before that crew gets back. They'll be coming for us, because they said so."

"They're Bedouins, and bad ones," added Monica. "I just know they've gone for some camels so they can take us out in the desert, and maybe hold us for ransom!"

"How many are there?" quizzed Biff.

"Four," returned Ted, "or five, counting the old potter. He's working with them."

Biff shot a quick glance toward the outer shop, then turned in that direction.

"I'll see what he's up to," Biff told the twins, "and I'll bring back a knife, or broken jar edge—something that will cut these ropes."

Biff was reaching into his pocket as he spoke, but unfortunately he didn't have a knife. All he had was the scarab, and he gripped it automatically as he strode toward the workshop. Maybe that very action made him alert to danger, for Biff wheeled suddenly as he caught a slight sound from his right.

The entire wall was swinging open, a huge honeycomb of stacked jars with it. Through the opening was coming one of the bearded Bedouins that Ted and Monica had described. He made straight for Biff,

intent upon adding another prisoner to the quota!

Biff hadn't time to reach the outer shop, nor to retreat to the inner storeroom where the twins still lay helpless. His only course was to meet the attacker, though the bearded man was half again his size. Biff drove for him, flaying his fists at the bearded face, as Ted yelled a warning:

"Look out, Biff—there's others behind him!"

Biff saw the others, and the sight of them diverted his attack. The first man warding a hard punch from Biff's left fist, as Biff made an untimely shift. Then, as Biff swung hard with his right, the bearded man caught his wrist, stopping the blow, and delivering a wrench that brought Biff almost to one knee.

There was a groan from Ted, a wail from Monica. At that moment, things looked sad indeed for big brother Biff. Then an odd thing happened.

In his instinctive whirl, Biff had been gripping his lucky scarab, and it was still in his right fist. As his numbed fingers opened under the cruel twist, Biff's upraised hand came to the level of his attacker's eyes, and they met the glitter of the golden beetle.

Instantly, the man's gaze turned from one of triumph to terror.

"*Jinn! Jinn!*" he shrilled. "*Afreet!*"

Releasing his grip on Biff's wrist, he wheeled away, flinging the fold of his desert robe over his head, as if to forget what he had seen. Blindly, he plunged between two other bearded men who halted just behind him, and continued on through the space in the wall.

Biff didn't try to dodge the second attacker. Real-

izing the happy turn that things had taken, he raised his right arm straight toward the fellow's eyes, with the scarab in open view. This time, the effect was even more electric. The second man didn't lay a hand on Biff. He turned and dived from sight as rapidly as the first man, taking the same route, exclaiming the same words: "*Jinn! Afreet!*"

That left only one more for Biff to handle. The fourth was probably outside, waiting with a camel, as Monica had feared. Confidently, Biff swung about, thrusting his right hand ahead of him, but this time, the motion was too late. Mistaking Biff's swing for a punch, the robed man warded it off. Biff's fingers, still numbed, lost their grip. The scarab scaled off and clattered amid the pottery.

There was no stopping the third man, after that. Biff had lost his magic touch. It was his turn to ward off hands that were too quick for him, big sinewy hands that were at his throat and clutching it before he had a chance to stop them.

To make the Bedouin release his grip on his throat, Biff grabbed the Bedouin's beard and yanked it hard, with both hands. That should have done the trick. In a way, it did; but it was the wrong trick. Instead of screaming in pain, the man roared with laughter as his beard came away in Biff's hands, leaving a tawny, smooth-shaven face beneath.

Now, the advantage was all the other way. The beardless attacker was grinning, as he tightened his grip on Biff's throat. Biff was grasping wildly, feebly at his assailant's robe. Encouraging calls from Ted and

Monica were becoming fainter, for a great roaring was sounding in Biff's ears.

His breath was nearly cut off and the face above him was growing dim, as everything began to go black. Now, Biff could hear nothing except an increasing crackle; and he knew that in another moment, he would black out entirely. Through his brain was drumming a hopeless monotone:

"Crack—crack—crack—"

CHAPTER XII

The Warehouse of Azab Habu

"Crack!"

It was the loudest, sharpest of them all, a prolonged "*cra-ack*" that actually roused Biff. For with that sharp crack, the long fingers had eased their grip on Biff's throat.

"Crack!"

Biff now could see the smooth face above him, and it was no longer grinning. What was more, it was swaying back and forth, and it looked sickly, weaving within the drapes of the Arabian headgear, which swayed like hanging curtains.

"Crack!"

The headdress was gone from the face above, and so were the fingers from Biff's throat. Wildly, Biff's attacker was jumping to his feet to ward off a counter-attack from another direction. Freed, Biff came to his hands and knees, shook his head to clear the spots from his eyes, and finally saw what was taking place.

Two newcomers had entered the fray—Chandra

and Kamuka. They had grabbed up water jars and were bombarding Biff's lone attacker. Each crack that Biff had heard while he was reviving, had been the impact of a *qulla* meeting the head of the Bedouin attacker. His headgear had served as a buffer until one missile had carried it away. That was enough.

Powerful though he was, the robed man could not withstand an attack from two directions, for Chandra and Kamuka had wisely separated in order to throw from different angles. He knew, too, that the boys had an unlimited supply of missiles and that their aim was improving with every *qulla* that they threw. He was glad that the wall was still open, enabling him to make a rapid departure.

The beardless Bedouin pulled the wall shut as he dived through, but that did not matter. None of the boys was anxious to follow him. Chandra and Kamuka brought Biff to his feet, and Biff quickly freed Ted and Monica.

"We wondered why you didn't meet us, Biff," declared Chandra, "and then Kamuka saw the closed gate—"

"I saw gate," specified Kamuka, "where I was looking for alley. So I said to Chandra, 'Maybe that's where Biff went'—and we decided to go and see."

"And you sure did the right thing!" complimented Biff. "Now, let's get out of here before that mob comes back. At least we have one piece of evidence against them." Biff brandished the false beard that he still gripped. "This!"

On the way out, Chandra and Kamuka looked for

the potter, but the old man had fled while the boys were delivering the barrage of *qullas*. Biff, meanwhile, was looking for something else, his precious scarab. He found it beneath a shelf of assorted pottery and pocketed it.

By then, the twins were urging Biff to "Hurry! Hurry!" so they all sped out through the alley to find Chandra and Kamuka trying to open the iron gate, which the old potter must have clamped shut when he fled. But the gate was no problem. After rattling it a few times and shouting through the grill, the boys attracted the attention of passers-by, who opened it for them.

Among those on the other side was Farriel. Dr. Croft's usually placid secretary showed real excitement in his greeting.

"So you are all here!" exclaimed Farriel. "We have been looking everywhere for you! Even the police have joined the hunt. What happened here?"

Two Cairo police officers arrived while Ted and Monica were telling their story. Biff picked it up from there, and Chandra and Kamuka chimed in with their accounts. Biff handed over the false beard that he had snatched from the third and last attacker. The police began a search of the deserted workshop and store-room. Soon the other members of the party were reached, and everyone returned to the Alhambra Hotel.

There, Dr. Croft listened glumly to the whole account, then turned hopelessly to Mr. Brewster.

"This really spells an end to our expedition," de-

clared Dr. Croft. "Well, Brewster, I can't blame you now. With Bedouin brigands invading the bazaar district, no one is safe anywhere."

"The police claim they were not Bedouins," Mr. Brewster said thoughtfully. "The fact that one was wearing a false beard indicates that they were hired ruffians in disguise. So I feel that Mrs. Brewster and the twins will be quite safe aboard the cruise ship. As for Biff, Chandra, and Kamuka"—Mr. Brewster gestured toward the boys—"they have proved their mettle here in the cramped quarters of Cairo, so I think they should do even better in the wide open spaces of Upper Egypt."

Biff and the other boys grinned happily at that, while Mr. Brewster added a dry smile of his own.

"And besides," he went on, chuckling, "Biff has the golden scarab that Mr. Meadowbrook gave him. It really seems to work like a charm."

Dr. Croft showed genuine surprise at mention of the scarab. He turned to Biff with the booming query: "You mean the ancient amulet that once belonged to Professor Ian MacGregor?"

"That's right." Biff nodded. "Here it is."

He passed the scarab to Dr. Croft, who studied it under a strong light and pointed out the sharp gleam of its tiny ruby eyes.

"Ah, yes!" Dr. Croft gave a knowing nod. "Whenever a superstitious Arab encounters one of these, it is apt to overwhelm him with fanciful fears. They still believe in *genii*, or *jinns* as they call them, as well as other fantastic legendary monsters."

"That was the first thing they said," Biff recalled. "They shouted, '*Jinn!*' and then '*Afreet*' as they dived for cover. What is the difference, sir, between a *jinn* and an *afreet*?"

"About the same," rejoined Dr. Croft with a smile, "as that between a phantom and a ghost. You have to believe in them to make a distinction; and even then you wouldn't know. In this case, the natives simply believe that anyone who carries a token like this scarab must be under the protection of a *genie*. Otherwise, he would not dare to handle it, because of the magic in it."

Biff recalled how even Abu Bey, the courtyard conjuror who was a wizard in his own right, had shied from the scarab.

"But there are thousands of scarabs in Egypt!" exclaimed Biff. "Why, they must be finding them every day—"

"Not like these," Dr. Croft said. "Golden scarabs with ruby eyes come only from very special tombs, the sort that have been associated with a mummy's curse directed against those who violate such tombs. Such legends have persisted since the days of Ancient Egypt."

"But the Arabs didn't conquer Egypt until much later," said Biff. "So how do the *jinn*s and *afreets* fit into the picture?"

"A good question," acknowledged Dr. Croft, "with an interesting answer. The Arabs believed that their *genii* helped them conquer Egypt and therefore were more powerful than any phantoms that the Egyptians

could summon. So when bad luck befell persons who pillaged the ancient Egyptian tombs, the Arabs decided that the *genii* must have become their invisible keepers. They superimposed one superstition upon another. That was about the size of it."

With that, Dr. Croft returned the golden scarab to Biff, who weighed it in his hand, as he remarked:

"The way it scared those fake Bedouins, I only wish I had two more scarabs like it; one for Chandra and one for Kamuka. Then we would all be sitting pretty."

Dr. Croft's eyes lighted as he tossed his shaggy head. "A grand idea!" He turned to Charles Keene. "Tomorrow, you can take the boys to the warehouse of Azab Habu and show him the golden scarab. He has artisans who can duplicate any form of ancient treasure or monument, from a beaded necklace or a tiny effigy to a carved obelisk. They can make two or more of the golden scarabs."

The next morning Mr. Brewster took Mrs. Brewster and the twins by train to Alexandria, to see them off on the *Helvetia*. Uncle Charlie and the boys accompanied them as far as the Cairo railway station, where a huge statue of Rameses II towered above the square which bore the ancient Egyptian monarch's name. As they rode away in a cab piloted by a genial Egyptian driver, Biff looked back and remarked:

"If Azab Habu can build anything the size of that statue of Rameses, he must have a warehouse the size of a skyscraper!"

Biff's quip was an apt one. Cairo was indeed a mixture of old and new. As they rode along, they passed

graceful mosques and ornate palaces, some of the latter transformed into museums; while in contrast to these, they saw glass-walled office buildings and balconied apartment houses, all in ultra-modern style.

Mingled with these were old structures that had been built during intervening centuries and were gradually giving way to the new. The cab reached just such a block and pulled up in front of an arcaded café, where Egyptian merchants, some in robes, others in modern business clothes, sat about tables drinking thick black coffee and smoking *narghiles*, or water-pipes. Apparently, they were engaged in leisurely transactions, for they were showing one another samples of cloth and other wares. Only a few of them bothered even to glance toward the cab, where the driver was pointing out an old, squatty building, with many tiers and jutting stories. The driver indicated an arched window that perched two floors above the street.

"Office of Azab Habu," he informed. "Find him up there."

Uncle Charlie and the boys entered the huge old building and found Azab Habu's office with the aid of Farriel, who was waiting for them and conducted them by a maze of winding stairs. There, Azab Habu met them and took them on a real tour of the premises. Though of medium height, Azab Habu was somewhat stocky and wore a small white turban, above a fancy jacket decorated with an ancient Egyptian pattern. He had baggy, striped pantaloons that gave his walk a waddly effect, and he kept beaming a broad smile from

beneath a pencil-thin mustache that formed a straight black streak across his tawny, flattish features. They reached a large, high room where Azab Habu halted in front of a crouched stone sphinx, the size of a young elephant.

"Very good sphinx," he said proudly. "I make this one."

It was Kamuka who exclaimed, "You mean it is a fake?"

"Not a fake," reprimanded Farriel. "A replica."

"A *real* fake," asserted Azab Habu. "You think it funny to call it a real fake? You should see those that do not look real!"

"Call it a perfect replica," suggested Charles Keene. "Exactly like those in the Avenue of Sphinxes at Karnak. Where are you shipping this one, Azab Habu?"

"To a museum," replied Azab Habu, "that cannot get a real one, so ask us to make replica instead."

They circled past the sphinx to a row of mummy cases, painted with colorful human figures. Azab Habu tapped them as he went along, calling them off from memory:

"Original — replica — replica — replica — original — replica—"

Another room was filled with statues of ancient Egyptian deities, with human bodies and animal heads. The walls were lined with great slabs, inscribed with hieroglyphics. In his matter-of-fact style, Azab Habu defined them individually as genuine or imitation. Apparently, the replica maker could tell his products at a glance.

Azab Habu gestured to other rooms as they passed, most of them filled with crates and boxes. He explained that those contained items of less importance. However, he was particularly proud of a workshop where several craftsmen were fitting ancient blocks and fragments of stone and tile.

"They are reconstructing a miniature temple," explained Azab Habu, "from pieces that it took years to gather. A temple of Hathor, the cow goddess."

Another room was crammed with shelves containing hundreds of small figurines, representing sphinxes, pharaohs, servants, birds, and animals. They were as numerous as the *qullas* that had lined the walls of the pottery shop and probably as cheap, for Azab Habu dismissed them in depreciating style.

"They sell these everywhere," he stated. "On the streets, on boats, in hotels—wherever there are tourists. But they must have signs saying, 'Imitation.' That is the law."

He led the way back to the office and sat down behind a big desk by the window. Still wearing his broad smile, he turned to Biff and remarked:

"Mr. Farriel tells me you have some special work you need done. May I see it?"

Biff produced the golden scarab, and Azab Habu took it delicately between thumb and finger, holding it to the sunlight, where he scanned it in minute detail.

"Very, very fine!" defined Azab Habu. "Ordinarily it would take weeks to duplicate it. But we have molds for bronze scarabs of this size. Our engravers will do

the finishing work in about three days. Come back then."

Azab Habu took a small jewel casket from his desk and started to place the precious scarab in it, for safe-keeping. Then, unable to resist another look at such a rare object, he again held it in the sunlight, leaning closer to the window. Biff's gaze followed the same direction, this time beyond Azab Habu's shoulder, down to the other side of the street below. Then Biff's gaze froze.

One patron of the Oriental sidewalk café was no longer interested in his coffee or his *narghile*. Instead, he had raised a pair of binoculars to his eyes and was training them squarely on the office window, focusing their powerful lenses on the golden scarab held by Azab Habu!

Though Biff could not see the face behind the binoculars, the man's manner, the smooth action of the long-fingered hands extended from the robed sleeves, brought home the name that had flashed to Biff's mind so often before:

"Pattak!"

CHAPTER XIII

At the Rock Temple

UNCLE CHARLIE was quick to note the direction of Biff's gaze. He nudged his nephew's elbow and whispered, "Keep watching, Biff!" Then, turning to Chandra and Kamuka, he added, "Come on, boys! When Biff finishes his business here, he and Mr. Farriel can join us. We'll be in the café across the street."

Even before he finished, Uncle Charlie had gripped Chandra and Kamuka each by the arm. He whisked them out through the doorway and down the winding stairs, before either could guess what it was all about. Farriel stood puzzled by the precipitous departure, while Azab Habu continued to admire the scarab in rapt style, unaware that he was being watched from below.

Biff still studied the man with the binoculars, hoping he would lower them and allow a glimpse of his face. At the same time, Biff was counting off the seconds, in the added hope that Uncle Charlie would get there soon enough to grab the interloper.

Then, Azab Habu unwittingly broke the spell. With a sigh, the replica maker turned from the win-

dow, placed the golden scarab in the jewel casket, and thrust the latter in his desk drawer. The man across the way must have spotted Biff's watching face in the binoculars, for he spun suddenly about, without lowering the glasses until his back was turned. He must have said something to his table companions, for they came to their feet excitedly, and one grabbed the binoculars as the others pointed upward.

Biff stepped back from the window, to avoid attracting too much attention. In doing so, he lost sight of the man who originally had had the glasses, for now, others were springing up from surrounding tables. The whole scene became a wild pantomime, as new figures dashed into it: Uncle Charlie, Chandra, and Kamuka, coming from across the street. Before they could take after the fugitive, wherever he had gone, they had become the center of a milling crowd.

Now, Farriel saw what was happening and with a parting bow to Azab Habu, the ever-efficient secretary gestured Biff through the door, then overtook him on the stairs. Farriel could be swift as well as efficient, for he actually goaded Biff with the quick, breathless statement:

"Hurry! Your uncle is in trouble! We must help him! It is not good to have trouble here!"

Uncle Charlie *was* in trouble, but Farriel promptly got him out of it. He made his way into the crowd and calmed the café patrons, who were shaking their fists in Keene's face and shouting at him in half a dozen languages, all of which Farriel understood. They told Farriel that Keene had interrupted a group of respect-

able merchants who were buying and selling optical instruments, among them a fine pair of binoculars. From his actions, Keene had accused someone of being a thief, which was an outrage.

Smoothly, Farriel agreed with that; then said it was all a mistake. His good friend Mr. Keene had been chasing a thief from Azab Habu's warehouse and thought that the fugitive had dashed across the street to hide in the crowded café. So Farriel was extending apologies from Mr. Keene, and with them compliments to the patrons of the coffeehouse in all their languages.

It ended in bowing and hand-shaking, with cups of coffee on the house. That, Biff felt, was the worst part of all, for the coffee was thicker and blacker than mud from the bottom of the river Nile, and probably not as tasty. So they were glad to go their way, even without a further clue to Pattak. Indeed, Biff was willing to concede that this time it might have been someone else entirely. It hadn't been Pattak at the pottery shop, so why should it be Pattak at the coffeehouse?

During the next three days, the boys spent much of their time at the wonderful Egyptian Museum, not far from the east bank of the Nile, where they viewed the relics from the famed tomb of King Tut-ankh-amen. Life-sized figures of gold and ebony stood as guardians, and the boys realized how rich the find had been.

Tut-ankh-amen's sarcophagus, hewn from quartzite, was on display. In the stone coffin lay a mummy case

of gold, one of a nest of three, that formed a lifelike image of the "boy king" as he was called. Among other finds were golden chariots, chairs, chests, and furnishings that his subjects had thought the youthful King Tut would require through the centuries that lay ahead.

All this impressed Biff and his two companions, Chandra and Kamuka. To them, it was something of a challenge. It had taken a great expedition, headed by Egyptologists of long standing, to unearth the lost tomb of the boy king, Tut-ankh-amen. Now, if three teenage boys, Biff, Chandra, and Kamuka, could help uncover the even more forgotten tomb of Prince Reth, it would be a triumph indeed.

Somehow, to Biff it seemed that he and his pals had the backing of young King Tut himself. There was a special reason for that. The royal robe of Tut-ankh-amen was adorned with a singular gold-and-silver buckle, inlaid with gem materials of carnelian, lapis lazuli, and turquoise, all shaped to the form of a glittering beetle, with the name of the boy king inscribed upon the unique scarab. Biff pointed it out to Chandra and Kamuka.

"Like Tut-ankh-amen," Biff declared, with a twinkle in his eye, but a serious note in his voice, "we will each have a magic scarab, good for the next three thousand years!"

"More like thirty-five hundred years," put in Chandra. "I've been reading the guidebook."

"So have I," asserted Kamuka. "I make it closer to thirty-three hundred."

"You win, Kamuka," Biff laughed. "But then, anyone who can figure out Brazilian money should be able to keep track of Egyptian monarchs."

There were many other relics besides Tut-ankh-amen's in the great Cairo Museum, and the boys were well briefed on Egyptology by the end of the three days. Then they made another visit to the warehouse of Azab Habu, this time accompanied by Mr. Brewster, who had returned from Alexandria.

Each of the boys received a golden scarab with ruby eyes, and all were greatly pleased, for the more closely they compared them, the more alike they seemed. Azab Habu beamed pleased approval.

"One is original," he declared. "Two are replicas. But all three look alike. Only do not try to sell them. You would not know which are the imitations."

"Don't let that worry you," asserted Mr. Brewster, shaking hands with Azab Habu. "None of these boys would part with his golden scarab at any price."

Dr. Croft had left Cairo on the overnight train for Luxor, taking Farriel with him. Mr. Brewster, Uncle Charlie, and the boys followed by plane the next morning. So did Abu Bey, the Egyptian *gilli-gilli*. All during those last days in Cairo, Abu Bey had kept faithful watch in the courtyard of the Hotel Alhambra. Not once had he seen a suspicious stranger, nor anyone resembling Pattak.

Immediately after the takeoff from the Cairo Airport, the boys could see the Sphinx and pyramids basking in the sands far below. Then the flight followed the fertile Nile valley, with desert wastes on both

sides of the broad strip of green. From then on, the trip became somewhat monotonous until the plane neared the landing field at Luxor.

There, the vast Temples of Karnak looked like piles of toy building blocks, as did the ruins of the Temple of Luxor, which sprouted from the modern town; while across the Nile, the colossal Statues of Memnon looked like mere pygmies, squatting on a great plain and guarding other ruins at the foot of the rugged hills beyond.

At the Hotel Luxor, they learned that Dr. Croft had gone on to Aswan and would meet them there. So they only stayed in Luxor overnight and planned to make the short hop to Aswan the next day. They had time to make brief tours of the temples at Luxor and Karnak, but not the great array of Theban monuments west of the Nile. Biff was philosophical on that point.

"Those ruins have kept for a few thousand years," he commented, as they began the plane trip. "So they should keep until we get back a few months from now—if we can find the Tomb of Reth that soon!"

"It will *have* to be that soon," returned Mr. Brewster, "or never. They won't hold off the flooding of the Valley of Ghosts much longer than that."

"And unless our reports show progress," added Uncle Charlie, "they are likely to cut us off at any time. Dr. Croft is one hundred per cent right. You just can't deal with these governmental departments when they begin disputing each other's authority. Dr. Croft is probably arguing with a lot of small-fry

officials in Aswan right now. At least, that's my guess."

Uncle Charlie's guess was wrong. At the Aswan Airport, a polite official met them and informed them that Dr. Croft had gone to inspect some rock temples farther up the Nile and wanted them to join him there. Soon the group was in a modern speedboat, skimming through the blue-green waters of the great manmade lake above the huge Aswan Dam, passing feluccas and other antique sailing craft.

These, however, were modern compared to what lay beneath the lake's surface—submerged Arab villages, complete with mosques and minarets; ancient Egyptian temples, once dedicated to the gods who were supposed to rule the Nile and now swallowed in the river's depths. Only near the end of the dry season, when the mammoth reservoir was nearly emptied to supply the thirsty lands of Lower Egypt, did any of those monuments emerge. Some, however, were permanently submerged.

Charles Keene told the boys all this, together with the fact that other areas had been inundated by dams farther up the Nile and that this was the very fate that might overtake the Valley of Ghosts before the Tomb of Reth could be located.

The speedboat finally reached a landing where a large station wagon was waiting. It took the Brewster party along a winding road far into the rugged hills, until the driver stopped and pointed out a steep pathway that ascended the side of a cliff, like steps hewn in the stone.

"That is one way Dr. Croft may come down," the driver stated. "It is the short way, but the hard way."

"How else would he come down from the rock temple?" inquired Mr. Brewster.

"By a longer path, but an easier one," replied the driver. "It comes out on other side of hill. I show you when we get there."

"Wait," objected Mr. Brewster. "It's getting late, and we can't afford to miss Dr. Croft. Some of us should take the short way, while the rest go the long way."

The boys jumped at the chance to climb the steep cliff path, so Mr. Brewster decided that they could do so, particularly when the driver said that it was steep but not too dangerous. A few minutes more and Biff was heading up the path with Chandra and Kamuka, while the car continued on the road into the hills, with Mr. Brewster, Uncle Charlie, and Abu Bey.

It was indeed a rugged climb, and breath-taking in more ways than one. The boys found themselves panting from exertion each time they paused to rest. And whenever they looked below, they saw a sheer wall dropping down to jagged rocks hundreds of feet below, with occasional glimpses of the Nile.

There were times when the rocky path actually jutted outward, though occasionally it tapered off to a more gradual slope. The same applied to the cliff that formed the inner wall of the pathway. Usually it rose in sheer or overhanging fashion, but at intervals, there were hollows in the form of rock temples, where fanciful stone figures stood on guard, and yawning



A chunky figure had launched itself in Biff's direction

gaps in the cliff represented cavernous inner shrines.

Since the steps widened at such places, the boys paused long enough to take turns at leading the way, but they did not stop to explore the temples. The craggy ridge towered to the west, cutting off much of the late sunlight and throwing splotchy shadows across the rocky steps, making the climb more difficult.

Biff, now in the lead, was particularly aware of this when he came to a turn where the path began a sharp series of zigzags, to avoid some bulging rocks. Biff turned to gesture back to Chandra and Kamuka, who were about a hundred feet behind; and he pointed to a sharp pinnacle above, indicating that they were nearing the trail's end.

Much to Biff's surprise, the pair halted in their tracks and waved wildly, as they shouted:

"Look out, Biff! Look out!"

Their voices awakened echoes from the rocks above: "Look out—look out—look out—" as Biff wheeled to view the menace that had escaped his notice, yet which was plainly visible to the boys farther down the path.

From a spot where the steps angled past a rock, a chunky figure in white had launched itself in Biff's direction. Even as Biff threw up his hands to ward off the drive, the man was upon him, hurling him straight toward the brink. All that Biff could do was make a frantic clutch at his attacker. It worked, but not as Biff hoped.

From down the path, Chandra and Kamuka gasped in horror as they saw Biff and his assailant hurtle over the rocky rim of the abyss that yawned hundreds of feet below!

CHAPTER XIV

The Face from the Past

TO BIFF, that sudden backward plunge seemed sure to be his last. He'd grappled, hoping that his foe would make a twist and keep them both on the rocky steps, long enough, perhaps, for Chandra and Kamuka to arrive and lend a hand. But the instinct of self preservation seemed lacking in the man, whose face, bronzed, square-jawed, and determined, was staring into Biff's as they toppled over the brink together.

Then, the twist came, in midair. A moment after it had begun, the fall ended. Biff's shoulders took a solid whack against a patch of hard, sandy soil, and his head would have received a much harder bash, if the grappling man had not thrust his arm as a buffer between it and a jutting rock. With it, the man gritted the warning:

"Hang on tight. Don't try to roll or twist away. Just hang on tight!"

Biff hung on tight, with his left hand, which was the only one that could gain a grip, for his right was sweeping out through empty space. In fact, he was so

overbalanced that he might have teetered in that direction, except that the chunky man's weight was still partly on him. They were on a half-ledge just below the brink of the zigzag path, but Biff's plight, precarious though it was, seemed trivial when he looked up and saw the far greater danger he had so narrowly escaped.

The point of the rocky pinnacle had broken loose and was already dropping straight down to the path where Biff had so lately been. It wasn't mere accident that had launched that huge stone upon its way. Etched against the dazzle of the late sunlight was a white-robed figure, its arms and hands extended as proof of the thrust that had been made.

For a moment, Biff feared that the chunk of rock would clear the brink and crush him where he now lay. But no, it had been loosed with calculated design. It struck the steps squarely and shattered there, its pieces bounding down the path, where Chandra and Kamuka flattened against the wall to avoid them. Then the robed figure disappeared from the pinnacle.

The bronzed man—who actually was Biff's rescuer—again supplied a helping hand by drawing Biff farther up on the narrow ledge and bringing him to his feet. Next, he was boosting Biff to the edge of the rocky steps, where Chandra and Kamuka hauled their chum up over the brink. Then, for the first time, Biff looked down and saw that the cliff appeared to be almost sheer. But the bronzed man merely smiled as he clambered up to join the boys.

"I was sure we'd find a landing space," he said.

"Those cliffs seldom drop off as sharply as you think. When I saw that joker shoving the rock up there"—grimly, the man gestured to the pinnacle above—"I hadn't any other choice. A few moments more, and he would have clipped both of us."

Turning to Biff, he said, "I'm Eric Yomer, the man who dragged Charlie Keene into all this. You must be Biff Brewster, and these must be your friends, Chandra and Kamuka. Dr. Croft told me about you and sent me over the ridge to see if any of your party was coming by this route. Let's go and join him now."

They crossed the ridge, skirting the now blunted pinnacle, but seeing no trace of the robed man who had fled. The steps continued, but the slope was slighter on the other side and brought them to a large, rocky shelf, where Dr. Thaddeus Croft was deep in conversation with a group of excavators who were superintending the opening of a large and lately discovered rock temple.

Higher up the slope were dozens of scattered workers, cutting new steps and hammering at fissures in the rock hoping to make new break-throughs to hidden temples or caverns. Many of these natives had white robes lying by, and any of them might have been the figure Biff had seen poised beside the pinnacle.

A shrill whistle blew an end to the day's work, and when Biff told Dr. Croft that Mr. Brewster and the others were coming up by the longer path, Dr. Croft decided to start down and meet them. Soon Biff was recounting his latest adventure to his father and Uncle

Charlie, with Abu Bey an attentive listener. Chandra and Kamuka added their reports, while Eric Yomer gave his version of what had happened and flatly blamed it on one of the excavation workers.

"I saw the man creep up and start to shove the rock," explained Yomer, "but I couldn't recognize him against the strong sunlight. Besides, I was busy from that moment on."

Dr. Croft waxed indignant at all this. When Farriel joined them a short while later, Croft gestured to the notebook that the secretary carried and stormily ordered:

"Check the name of every excavation worker! Find out where each man was at the closing hour. Question all of them—"

Farriel interrupted with a despairing gesture. His appeal was directed to Biff's father and uncle as well. For once, the owlish secretary seemed utterly at a loss.

"This is not our excavation," he reminded them. "We are merely guests here, by courtesy of the Mid-Eastern Archeological Society. This list I have been making"—he referred to his notebook—"simply contains the names of workers whom I have interviewed to learn if they will go along with our expedition, provided they can be spared. I cannot antagonize them or stir up trouble."

"You are quite right," decided Dr. Croft, as he subsided wearily. "Our main object here is to gain a few trained workers upon whom we can depend. Check those men carefully, Farriel, and ignore the rest."

They spent that night in the extensive, well-pa-

trolled encampment that had been set up by the Mid-Eastern Archeological Society. A brilliant moon, rising from the desert, cast its glow across the broad, black waters of the Nile, which seemed to stretch into the limitless distance. As they sat in their large umbrella tent, Biff's father announced his future policy.

"We're going to see this through to the finish," he declared. "Since we have become the target of an unknown enemy, we shall make him show his hand until we know who he is. Then we can deal with the situation intelligently.

"So far, Biff has taken almost the entire brunt. However, if one of the other boys had been leading the way, he would have been the target. What happened to the twins back in Cairo is another example. It adds up to just this: Our enemies will injure any one of us in order to discourage all of us."

Mr. Brewster smiled rather grimly and added:

"But we will stick it out as long as luck is with us. This time, it arrived in the form of our good friend, Eric Yomer."

The bronzed man shook his head at the compliment.

"It was just luck that I came downriver," he stated. "I could have gone on to the Valley of Ghosts and waited for you there. But it didn't seem much use, so I came here instead."

One member of the group had his own idea of luck and how it operated. When the boys came from their tent the next morning, they saw Abu Bey performing his cup and ball trick for a group of excavation

workers, who gawked with astonishment as the little ducks made their appearance.

"Where they come from, I don't know," Biff told the other boys, "But Abu Bey always has them when he wants them."

"Like you have golden beetles," returned Abu Bey, turning his bland smile from one boy to another. "They help you yesterday. They help you tomorrow and next day—and next—"

Abu Bey gathered up his props and went on his way to impress more workers with his *gilli-gilli* tricks.

The Croft-Brewster Expedition started up the Nile that afternoon in a whole flotilla of motorboats, taking along a dozen skilled excavation workers who had been hand-picked by Farriel, as well as enough equipment and supplies to last for at least a month. There was little worry on that score, however. In the cabin of their swift boat, Eric Yomer spread out a large map and explained why.

"We'll go to the end of this long arm of the river," he stated, "and from there, we can transport everything by old trucks and station wagons, to a little village near the Valley of Ghosts. There is a road, once used by other expeditions—"

"But the last was ten years ago!" broke in Dr. Croft. "I know, because I headed it. Why, sandstorms must have buried the road completely."

"They did," Yomer smiled, "but it was cleared last year when the Valley of Ghosts was surveyed for flooding purposes. The road has been kept open."

"But I don't recall any village." Croft ran his fingers through his shaggy hair. "Why, I don't even see it on the map."

"It has no name," explained Yomer. "It is made up of farmers who have been keeping on the move each time the level of the Nile has been raised and new lands inundated. If we can, we will hire most of them as unskilled workers."

"But if we do, our supplies will run short."

"We can always send back to the Nile for more, thanks to the open road. In an emergency, we can fly supplies in by air. Actually, hiring workers is our only worry. That depends on what Kaldah has to say."

"Kaldah?" The name was unfamiliar to Dr. Croft. "Who is he?"

"The head man of the village. His word is law there. I've tried to see him a dozen times, but he has never been around. Always, he is off somewhere, probably looking for a suitable place to move next. He should be back by now, however, for I told the villagers to expect us."

"I'll handle Kaldah," promised Dr. Croft. "I know the ways of these head men. Money—*baksheesh* on a big scale—or graft, as we would term it. That is their motto."

It took another full day to reach the landing at the extreme tip of a long estuary of the Nile, which fingered its way eastward into the hilly waste of the Nubian Desert. There, the slower boats finally caught up with the faster. Supplies were unloaded and the haul by truck and station wagon begun. Occasional sand

drifts impeded the rugged road, but the expedition came at last to the sprawly village mentioned by Eric Yomer.

Situated in a dry riverbed, the village surrounded a broad mudhole that the former farmers had dammed in order to raise a few pitiful crops until the flood season came again. There were palm trees that gave the people food, and acacias that provided fodder for their scrawny cattle, and they lived in shelters of thatched palm leaves while they eked out their miserable existence.

The sight of the modern motorcade was as welcome as the arrival of a camel caravan in the old days. The villagers flocked to meet the cars and trucks. They surrounded the members of the Brewster party as soon as they alighted. Then the villagers turned to the biggest hut of all, happily shrieking, "Kaldah! Taala! Shoof!" as they called upon their headman to come and see the visitors.

Then Kaldah himself appeared, a tall, imposing man, attired in a short white robe, who stood with folded arms, studying the strangers with sharp, dark eyes that bored from an immobile face. But it wasn't Kaldah's expression, it was the mold of his features that brought gasps, particularly from Biff.

Above those boring eyes were wide, jet-black eyebrows. Below the straight nose were lips as fixed as those of the Sphinx. Kaldah, the headman of the unnamed village, was the living image of Pattak, the ancient Egyptian tomb builder!

CHAPTER XV

Time Runs Short

TO BIFF, the shock was as great as if he had been riveted by a lightning stroke. The other members of the party were less perturbed by the likeness between Pattak and Kaldah, his modern counterpart. Charles Keene was startled. So was Chandra, for they also had encountered the living mummy. But their experiences with Pattak had been brief and by no means as harrowing as Biff's.

Dr. Croft eyed Kaldah oddly, as though trying to recall his face. But to Mr. Brewster—who had never seen the mummy case of Pattak—there was nothing unusual about the village headman, except that he appeared too important for such a trifling capacity. As for Farriel, his serious expression showed no change at all, as he stepped forward and began a well-rehearsed speech in Arabic which he addressed directly to Kaldah.

After the usual compliments and formalities, Farriel announced that the expedition wanted to hire all the able-bodied men the village could spare, the purpose being to conduct excavations in the Valley of Ghosts

to find the Tomb of Reth. Knowing the import of what Farriel was saying, Biff watched Kaldah to study his reaction. But there was no change whatever upon that immobile, black-browed face that seemed more like Pattak's the longer Biff viewed it.

Kaldah accepted the proposition, and the haggling began, with the headman using occasional words in English, which he seemed to understand. Meanwhile, Abu Bey was astonishing the villagers with his *gilli-gilli* work, which included such tricks as passing a borrowed bracelet onto a wooden stick, while both ends were held. Then, by special request, Abu Bey began piling up little heaps of stones, over which he tilted his head as though listening for some faint sound. The villagers were very much interested in this, when Kaldah approached and spoke to them in a commanding tone.

Farriel interpreted for the benefit of the Brewster party.

"He wants thirty men to begin a march to the Valley of Ghosts," stated Farriel. "It is only a dozen miles. They should be there by dusk."

Just then, Abu Bey began clattering the stones and disputing Kaldah's order. Abu Bey spoke volubly in Arabic, then in English, saying, "No, no! Do not go. Stones say *haboob* come soon. We must wait."

By *haboob*, Abu Bey meant a type of sandstorm common to the Nubian desert. Kaldah, his arms still folded, turned to his men and calmly gave the order: "Wait." So wait they did. At the end of an hour, it appeared that Abu Bey had either made a bad guess

or was an outright fake. Then the sun took on a coppery tint that gradually reddened. From far across the desert came a black, billowy shape. At sight of it, the natives babbled:

"Jinn! Afreet! Shaitan!"

It was easy to picture the low rolling sandstorm as a monstrous devil, for it took on every shape, human and inhuman, during its swift, roaring approach. The Brewster party took to their cars and trucks, while the villagers dived into their thatched huts, which seemed poor shelter but proved to be sufficient.

Kaldah had been wise in choosing this *wadi*, or ravine, as the site for a village. Its steep, curved walls diverted the fearful hail of pelting sand, enabling the huts to withstand the *haboob*. The air was stifling and gritty, but when the roaring blackness cleared, everyone emerged from shelter unharmed. Sand had penetrated and filtered everywhere, but it caused discomfort and nothing more.

The visitors pitched tents and stayed in the *wadi* that night, furnishing the villagers with such choice food that they became all the more eager to join the expedition. The next day they set out for the Valley of Ghosts and reached it before noon. The valley proved to be a vast, winding gulf, its walls towering to gigantic palisades hundreds of feet above the irregular floor, while its width averaged a quarter-mile or more.

The Valley of Ghosts was fairly clear of sand, proving that sandstorms did not reach its confines. Along occasional stretches were piles of loose rock,

apparently the result of landslides, and after several miles the valley terminated in irregular cliffs. Overall, it formed a huge, misshapen bowl, its only opening a bottleneck at the western end.

After they had set up camp near the site where they planned to begin excavations, Eric Yomer spread a large map on a drawing board and indicated a darkened area that narrowed to a point about a dozen miles from the valley entrance.

"Soon, that sector will be flooded," stated Yomer. "Then they will merely have to blast a thin wall"—he indicated the spot on the map—"and the water will pour down through this deep but narrow *wadi*." He traced a dotted line that made a zigzag course, then added, "From there, it will enter this valley, as you can see."

"And because of that," Uncle Charlie put in grimly, "we have no time to waste."

"Absolutely none," rejoined Yomer. "That is why we needed Dr. Croft so badly. He has already probed the greater part of the Valley of Ghosts. He can eliminate the sections that have been covered."

Dr. Croft proceeded to do exactly that, crossing off one sector after another until only a scattered few remained. He tapped the one that marked their campsite and turned to Biff's father.

"While we are excavating here," Dr. Croft declared, "you can begin your mining surveys in these other spots, so we will be that far along when we come to them. If you happen to make a gold strike, it would be wonderful. But better still"—a broad smile played

over Dr. Croft's ruddy face—"let us hope that you strike some clue to the long lost Tomb of Reth!"

The days and nights that followed proved highly intriguing to Biff and the other boys. They soon learned why this area was called the "Valley of Ghosts." As they probed its reaches with Biff's father and a few natives who knew how to identify gold-bearing rocks, they came to deep fissures and dead ends where even the slightest whisper was echoed from the towering cliffs.

Sometimes a call would carry through the valley like a long, trailing wail; and at times, the wind would bring weird murmurs from the rocks. Each morning, the thick blackness of night would literally burst into a sudden sunrise, which in turn brought clanging sounds from stony crags as they expanded under the heat. By midafternoon, ghostly shadows would begin to streak the valley floor. Later, vivid, varicolored sunsets would give way to a sky that resembled a huge drape of purple velvet, sparkling with stars that stabbed like knife thrusts.

The entire valley then would thicken into a mass of solid darkness, until dispelled by a new dawn. Occasionally, during the night, some animal cry would rend the inky stillness, and sometimes a stir would be heard outside a tent. But the boys always had flashlights handy and were quick to use them if they heard suspicious sounds.

Handy, too, were their golden scarabs. There were close to fifty native workers in camp, counting those that Dr. Croft had borrowed from Mid-Eastern and

the crew that Kaldah had brought from the village in the *wadi*. Some of these men might prove dangerous, but all were definitely superstitious. Biff had scared off attackers in Cairo by flashing his golden scarab. Now all three boys were equipped to do the same if they encountered trouble here in the Valley of Ghosts. But better even than the scarabs, they had Abu Bey at hand.

The *gilli-gilli* had awed the natives not only with his tricks and magic, but by his warning of the approaching *haboob* back at the *wadi*. Time and again, he would gather up stones and make predictions that invariably came true, for Abu Bey could combine good guesswork with sharp observation. One day, he told some workers to stay away from a certain cliff. That very afternoon, it collapsed and caused a great landslide.

One night, Abu Bey warned that jackals would be prowling about the camp and, sure enough, their weird howls were heard. Uncle Charlie and Eric Yomer were promptly on the job with rifles and blasted away into the darkness, when Abu Bey pointed out the course that the fleeing beasts had taken. The shots missed, but Abu Bey scored a new triumph that impressed the native workers.

Privately, Biff, Chandra, and Kamuka discussed that incident and decided that Abu Bey himself could have been the prowler. A skilled ventriloquist as well as a magician, he could have faked the jackal calls, then doubled into camp and pointed out the beasts that he alone could see because they didn't exist. But

the boys agreed that such trickery was all the more to Abu Bey's credit, since he was using it to offset any treachery that might exist in camp.

Oddly, however, such treachery did not rear its ugly head. At the very start, the boys asked Abu Bey what he thought of Kaldah. Abu Bey gave this reply:

"To me, Kaldah looks the same as man in Cairo hotel."

"And to me," put in Biff, "he looks like the mummy of Pattak, the hotel thief in Tangier, and man who took those photos of Uncle Charlie's papers, on board the cruise ship."

"I saw the mummy case of Pattak," agreed Chandra. "I saw man on the dock at Tangier. I have seen Kaldah. All three look exactly alike."

Kamuka had no comment. He had seen Kaldah, that was all. But all agreed that it now was up to Kaldah to show his hand again, most probably in Pattak's style. But Kaldah did not do so.

Instead, as the days turned into weeks, he proved himself to be the most efficient supervisor Dr. Croft had ever known. While Mr. Brewster and the boys moved from one site to another, pointing out the places where tombs might be found, Dr. Croft followed and put Kaldah's crew to work. Under Kaldah's supervision, the poor, pitiful villagers from the *wadi* completed excavations in record time. In contrast, the trained crew that Farriel had brought from the rock temple seemed like mere beginners.

The campsite was moved to each new excavation,

with Eric Yomer handling it in efficient style. With the passing weeks, he had Kaldah bring more men from the village, so that now the tent town had its commissary, its carpenter shop, its hospital, and other required departments. Motors ran the generators that furnished the electric current, and trucks made regular trips back and forth from the landing on the Nile, bringing fresh supplies, especially great drums filled with that most precious commodity of the desert dweller—water.

Oddly, however, water was still the greatest worry of this expedition. One day, Dr. Croft opened a big envelope that had come with the mail and stormily announced:

“Our time is up! Unless we can show immediate results, the valley will be flooded. Mining, excavations, it doesn’t matter which. Just one or the other, or they will drown us out. I knew this would happen as soon as those two government departments put their heads together. Until now, each thought the other was being paid off. Now they know the truth, and each wants to beat the other to it.”

Mr. Brewster did not share Dr. Croft’s view of corruption where the current Egyptian government was concerned.

“Suppose we show them results,” he suggested. “I can supply specimens of gold-bearing rock, even though it does not come up to the required standard. What can you show in the way of excavations?”

“Not very much,” Dr. Croft returned glumly.

"Finding forgotten tombs is generally hit or miss. Never hit, always miss. We have just about covered the entire valley."

"What about that rockpile at the inner end?" queried Mr. Brewster. "It looks like a fairly recent landslide. Could it have covered the Tomb of Reth?"

"Never," returned Dr. Croft. "Why, we excavated there, ten years ago, and found nothing."

"But the excavations were higher up," Mr. Brewster reminded him. "I have studied them, and I think they caused the landslide."

"They probably did," Croft nodded, "because we had already excavated below, so we didn't care what happened. Still, you may have something, Brewster." Croft turned to Farriel and said, "Check the rockpile. Estimate its tonnage and how long it would take to remove it. Perhaps we can argue those officials into giving us more time."

As Farriel left, Biff noted Kaldah standing in the doorway. The village headman had his arms folded, and his face was as impassive as ever, reminding Biff all the more vividly of Pattak's features. Without even a glance in Biff's direction, Kaldah inquired in slow-spoken English, all in one-syllable words:

"You want me and my men to go take rock from hill?"

"After Farriel brings us his report," Croft nodded. "Then we will know how many men we need."

Kaldah bowed as though that settled it. Then he said:

"I go tell men you will need them."

An hour later, Farriel was back with his report. He was accompanied by two of the Mid-Eastern excavators and by their estimate, it would take a full week to clear the debris from the foot of the cliff. Hearing that, Dr. Croft came to a decision. He turned to Biff's father and stated:

"We had better start for Aswan at once and take Yomer with us. Between the three of us, we should certainly be able to convince these officials to give us more time, no matter how stupid they may be. But meanwhile, the work must go on."

To that, Mr. Brewster nodded prompt agreement.

"Keene will be in full charge during our absence," continued Dr. Croft, "with Farriel on hand to furnish any assistance. So let us start at once."

The three men were on their way ten minutes later: Dr. Croft, the archeologist, Tom Brewster, the mining expert, and Eric Yomer, the ambitious young engineer, all set to plead their case, if the authorities would only listen. Charles Keene decided that he, in turn, had no time to lose. He packed the boys into a car along with Farriel and Abu Bey, and they headed deep into the valley, to begin operations there.

Kaldah and his crew were on hand when they arrived, waiting beside the mammoth rockpile. Biff and the boys sprang from the car and started up a path that led to the slanted stone pile. There, Biff paused and queried:

"Where shall we start, Uncle Charlie? About here?"

Charles Keene nodded. "That will be good enough."

"Stand by," Biff said gaily, "while I pry the first rock."

There was a short, black stick of wood lying beside the rockpile, so Biff stooped to pick it up and use it as a lever under the nearest rock. Hardly had he gripped the stick before he regretted it. With a hiss, the piece of wood came to life, squirmed in Biff's hand, and reared a fanged head in his direction.

Biff was holding an African cobra, one of the deadliest of all venomous snakes!

CHAPTER XVI

The Scarab Fails

"Naja haje!"

The cry came from the villagers surrounding Kaldah. They referred to the snake that was squirming in Biff's grip and about to strike even as they pronounced its name. But fast though the *naja haje* was, a human hand proved faster.

Not one of Biff's hands. They were fully occupied as he tried to fling the snake away. The hand that sped into the scene was Abu Bey's, for the *gilli-gilli* man had sprung forward the moment he saw Biff stoop to pick up the stick. Abu Bey caught the cobra the instant before it struck and pressed his thumb at the back of the serpent's head and just below it.

It worked like a charm. Not only did the snake's squirming cease, its whole length stiffened. Abu Bey relaxed his grip and held the cobra up for all to see, a seemingly lifeless stick of wood. Biff found his voice then and asked in an amazed but hollow tone:

"What sort of trick is this?"

"No trick of mine," returned Abu Bey. "Someone press neck of *naja haje* and put it here like stick. So I do the same, when I catch it. Watch."

He gave the rigid snake a long fling, and when it struck the ground, it came to life again and squirmed away. Immediately, Kaldah's villagers began an excited babble.

"You see?" said Abu Bey. "Somebody try to frighten them away from rockpile. But I tell them not to worry. If they find more *naja haje*, I take care of them."

Abu Bey spoke to the group in Arabic, and as they listened, they kept stealing glances at their leader, Kaldah. One word from the man whose stony face resembled Pattak's, and Abu Bey's arguments would have come to nothing. But Kaldah maintained his impassive pose, as though willing to let his followers make up their own minds. Suddenly, they clambered to the top of the slanted rockpile and began throwing down chunks of stone.

Though Uncle Charlie was nominally the supervisor, Abu Bey was actually in charge from then on. He stood at the top of the stone pile, stepping down as it gradually diminished, keeping a ferret eye on everything that happened, ready to pounce to the rescue as he had for Biff.

That went on throughout the day. With nightfall, Uncle Charlie had powerful searchlights brought up, so that a night shift could take over. The villagers kept working eagerly, even feverishly, encouraged by the promise of extra pay. Abu Bey told them that there would be no danger from snakes at night, which gave him a chance to get some rest.

Biff and the other boys sat up late discussing the odd turn that events had taken.

"There must be something under that rockpile," insisted Chandra. "Otherwise, there would be no reason for anyone to put the snake there."

"Kaldah was out there ahead of us," reminded Kamuka, "so that gave him his chance. But why is he letting his men take away the rockpile?"

"Because he wants to cover up his game," declared Biff. "But probably he has something else in mind. Kaldah, or Pattak, whichever you want to call him, knows more tricks than Abu Bey."

By dawn, the rockpile was one third gone and Abu Bey was back on the job. Toward noon, he called a sudden halt as a sandy patch came into sight. Abu Bey studied it, and pointed out a slightly winding streak in the sand to Uncle Charlie.

"See that?" queried Abu Bey. "Snake track, going down under rocks."

"Then there may be real danger lurking there," observed Keene grimly. "You'd better warn the workers."

"More likely we scare snake deeper," was Abu Bey's opinion. "Soon, maybe, we see."

An hour later, Abu Bey pointed out more snake tracks in the sand. This time, Biff studied them with his Uncle Charlie.

"Plenty of room down there," assured Abu Bey. "Big enough for snake pit, maybe big enough for something else."



*They rapidly uncovered the entrance
to a deep-set tomb*

Again, villagers worked the night shift, trusting the bright lights as they did Abu Bey. With morning there was new excitement, for enough rocks had been removed to show traces of an old excavation. All available men were put to work, and they rapidly uncovered the entrance to a deep-set tomb. Abu Bey was reciting an incantation against snakes, but the clatter made by the work crew probably did more to frighten them; at any rate, the passage proved clear of snakes.

Then the tomb itself commanded full attention. Detail for detail, almost stone for stone, it was the exact double of the tomb in the cellar of the London museum. This was the original Tomb of Reth, here in the Valley of Ghosts, exactly where its princely occupant had been buried, according to tradition.

Like a silent statue, Kaldah stood watching this discovery, his arms still folded, as though he had expected all this to happen. Certainly, Pattak, the actual builder of this tomb, could not have displayed a more possessive air than did this modern Egyptian who so resembled him.

It was Biff's uncle who stepped forward and began to probe the closed front of the tomb, to see if he could find the same secret catch that had released the sealed door of the London replica. While Keene was working at that task, Kaldah joined him. In expert fashion, the village headman probed the cracks between the stones with his long fingers.

"Here we have it," announced Kaldah, his English

becoming very smooth. "At the precise spot where it should be."

A muffled click, and the front of the tomb slid open. Unlike many of the ancient Egyptian tombs, it showed no painted decorations, but those were hardly to be expected, since Prince Reth, according to legend, had been buried secretly. But when Biff's Uncle Charlie, and Kaldah entered, followed by Farriel, they found the tomb totally empty.

The mummy of Prince Reth, all his regal treasure and possessions, even the sarcophagus that belonged in the inner vault, were gone!

The fact that the tomb had been robbed proved more serious than anything else might have. When Kaldah announced the news to the villagers, they set up an angry murmur that rose to tumultuous shouts. They began shaking their fists at Charles Keene, Biff, and the other two boys; next, they were threatening Farriel and the workers he had brought with him.

"You see?" Biff put the grim query to Chandra and Kamuka. "I told you that Kaldah would somehow gain the upper hand."

Calmer than ever, Kaldah had again folded his arms. His smile was wise, but cold, as Keene turned to him with an appeal for aid.

"We didn't rob the tomb," Uncle Charlie argued. "Tell that to your village rabble. Call them off."

"That may be too late," said Kaldah coolly. "However, if you can furnish proof of your sincerity, we shall accept it. Perhaps one of you has some token of good faith, something to show that you are under the

protection of the ancient powers which once ruled Egypt and are rising again to begin a new reign."

As he spoke, Kaldah scanned the boys with his cold, bright eyes, and his lips curled in a contemptuous challenge, as stony as his usual sphinxlike smile. This was all for the benefit of his angry followers, for though the villagers could not understand English, they caught the import of Kaldah's words from his manner and his smile. This was probably the type of test that a smart headman would put to helpless strangers, something with very simple conditions, but which they would be unable to meet.

Some token from Egypt's past! How could any of these boys produce one? The answer came from Kamuka, who had thrust his hand into his jacket pocket and was gripping the golden beetle that he carried there. Kamuka had been counting on that scarab to bring him luck, and now he was sure it could. This was the very sort of token that Kaldah must mean!

Kamuka whipped his fist from his pocket, opened it, and displayed his golden scarab. As the burnished metal scintillated in the vivid sunlight, Kaldah's followers shrank back with a fearful moan, which turned into gasped cries:

"Jinn! Shaitan! Afreet!"

During the babble, Kaldah turned to his followers, unfolded his arms, and extended his hands palms down, with fingers wide. As the babble lessened, he addressed the villagers angrily in Arabic. Abu Bey, standing by, translated the words into English, keeping his tone so low that only the boys could hear it.

"He is telling them to forget *jinn*s and *afreets*," informed Abu Bey. "He says that they are under the rule of someone more ancient and more powerful, called Thoth, the master of the strange bird that led them to their *wadi*."

"Thoth!" exclaimed Biff. "The Egyptian deity with a head like an ibis, the sacred bird of Ancient Egypt. They must have seen an ibis at their mud pond. The ibis is almost extinct, but a few are still around."

"I have seen pictures of Thoth," added Chandra, "in the museum at Cairo. He was an ancient keeper of the dead."

Kaldah had finished his harangue. He turned to Kamuka and beckoned the Brazilian boy forward, at the same time gesturing to the villagers.

"Show them the golden scarab," ordered Kaldah, in his smooth English. "Let them see what it contains, the symbol of Thoth!" Then, as Kamuka hesitated, puzzled, Kaldah's lips spread in a triumphant smile, as he added, "Press those ruby eyes, so the scarab will open and reveal its secret!"

Kamuka pressed the tiny eyes, but nothing happened. Kaldah's gaze narrowed. His voice came low, but sharp:

"So! You are carrying only a false scarab. An imitation, meant to trick us."

"That is right." The prompt words came from Chandra. "Kamuka carries an imitation. I have the real scarab. Here it is." With that, Chandra displayed his own gleaming beetle, flourished it toward the on-lookers, and pressed its ruby eyes.

Chandra's scarab also failed to pop open. Like Kamuka, Chandra was carrying one of the replicas made by Azab Habu's craftsmen, an imitation so good that it could not be told from the original, except for the special feature about which the boys had known nothing until just now.

Two out of three had missed, and angry snarls were rising from Kaldah's fanatical villagers, when Biff decided to settle them. Coolly, confidently, he brought his golden scarab from his pocket and held it high in the sun. Knowing that he was playing a sure game, with all chance of failure eliminated, Biff announced triumphantly:

"This is the true token! Tell them that, Kaldah!"

Kaldah told them, and as he did, Biff pressed the ruby eyes of his scarab; once, then again, and still again. But nothing happened. Biff's scarab, too, was a dud, a mere imitation, like the others!

Rooted, Biff, Chandra, and Kamuka stared at one another helplessly, realizing that they were now at the mercy of Kaldah's fierce followers!

CHAPTER XVII

The Enemy Takes Over

AS THE tumult rose, Kaldah still stood by, letting the villagers display their fury, which seemed to increase and then subside, as though the natives were a seething, human sea. Biff felt chilled, almost frozen, despite the heat of the desert sun, but he still clutched his scarab, useless though it seemed.

Then, suddenly, Biff realized that this tumult revealed the thinking of Kaldah's followers themselves. They were torn between two long-outmoded myths. They wondered if the power of the bird-god, Thoth, the product of Ancient Egypt, could meet and match the evil forces in the form of *genii* and other monsters that the Arabian conquerors were thought to have launched throughout this land.

Whichever way the human tide might turn, Kaldah would twist it to his own advantage. Of that, Biff felt sure. However, the scarabs still could help, for any person who dared to carry one was proof against superstitious attackers. Kaldah noted Biff's grim expression and saw it reflected in the faces of Chandra and Kamuka. Coolly, Kaldah announced:

"Only the holder of the true token can be master here!"

Turning to his followers, Kaldah repeated that statement in Arabic, receiving an approving shout in return. Then a momentary lull was broken by a harsh, rasping voice that declared:

"In that case, I am master here!"

All turned, including Kaldah, who was the most surprised of all. The speaker was Farriel, and an amazing change had come over the usually self-effacing secretary. Farriel had removed his thick-rimmed glasses. Now, his owlish expression had become a vulture's glare. Gleaming brighter than his eyes was the object that Farriel displayed, a golden scarab of his own!

Identical in appearance with the replicas that Biff and the other boys carried, this was the original model. Farriel left no doubt of that, when he pressed the beetle's ruby eyes. The golden casing sprang open, revealing a flat red stone within. That stone was a carnelian and etched upon it, like lines carved with gold, was the ibis-beaked profile of Thoth!

The villagers were crowding about Farriel, shrieking happily at sight of the ancient charm that they had hoped to see, yet which not one of them dared to touch. After the fanatics had their fill, Farriel showed the Thoth token to Uncle Charlie and the boys and then to Kaldah himself.

"Better look while you still can!" Farriel announced with a sneer. With that, he snapped the scarab shut, turned to the fanatical villagers and snarled the order:

"Take them! Get rid of them!"

As the fierce horde swept forward, the boys quickly formed a cordon about Charles Keene and thrust their scarabs into the sunlight, hoping the flashes would scare off the attackers. For the moment, it worked. The wild-eyed crowd hesitated, but did not fall back. Kaldah, too, had become a target of his own crew, now that Farriel had taken over. But the Egyptian stood his ground, still as stony as a statue, never blinking at the threatening fists thrust in his face by his former followers.

That left only Abu Bey. He was isolated, surrounded by a howling, milling throng. Biff's groan was echoed by the other boys, for they felt sure that they had seen the last of the friendly *gilli-gilli* man. Suddenly the human whirlpool spread. Scared villagers cowered back and away from Abu Bey, who had risen to his full height and was shouting threats in a mixture of English and Arabic.

In one hand, Abu Bey clutched a crooked black stick, as if about to hurl it. In the other fist he was rattling a handful of loose stones.

"You saw me change stick to *naja haje!*" Abu Bey was telling the cowering crowd. "You want me to throw it now? At you—at you—at you?" He made false jabs at one villager, then another, always retaining the stick and laughing loudly as the threatened men dived away. Then:

"But why should I change stick into snake while I have these?" Abu Bey clattered the stones in his other

hand. "With these I bring *haboob* back at *wadi*. I bring bigger *haboob* here, all through this valley where the ghosts live. This time it will catch all of you. Now!"

Another rattle of the stones, and villagers were grovelling before Abu Bey, pleading with him not to deal in *gilli-gilli* of such vast proportions. Soon Abu Bey would have become the real master of the situation, except that Farriel intervened with a smart trick of his own. He stepped up beside Abu Bey, flashed his scarab, and sprang it open again.

"We are friends," he announced. "Abu Bey and I. He will not turn stick into snake. He will not bring *haboob* to Valley. Abu Bey and I will make a thing we call a deal."

Farriel translated all that into Arabic, with the exception of the last few words, which were for the benefit of Biff and his companions, and were something that the natives would not have understood, anyway. Then, during the lull that followed, Farriel spoke steadily to Abu Bey.

"The deal is this," said Farriel. "My men will tie up Keene and the boys. They will do the same with Kaldah. We shall leave supplies, food and water, for them to eat and drink when they finally work themselves free."

Bluntly, Abu Bey asked, "How long will that take?"

"A few hours at most," returned Farriel. "Probably a lot less, since knots are easy to untie. All we want

is time to pack up and get away, so we can warn Dr. Croft, before these people can spread the news that the Tomb of Reth was found to be empty."

Abu Bey looked at Uncle Charlie, who gave him a nod indicating that he should do what he thought best. With a side glance toward Kaldah, Biff was sure that he saw the stony-faced man nod also.

"You will come along with us," Farriel told Abu Bey. "If I let you stay, you might release the prisoners. And even worse, the villagers might think that you would send a *haboob* after them. When Dr. Croft and I are in the clear, you can go back to Cairo. Agreed?"

Abu Bey nodded agreement. Farriel called upon a few of the men whom he had brought from the rock temple diggings and told them to bind the prisoners hand and foot, which they proceeded to do. Biff found himself seated, with his wrists roped behind him and his ankles bound in similar fashion, tightly, yet not enough to cut off circulation. The men doing the binding were not as superstitious as the rest, yet they still seemed a little awed by the fact that Biff, Chandra, and Kamuka were carrying golden scarabs.

Then, while Farriel was bringing the supplies and letting Abu Bey inspect them, the men tightened the bonds on the wrists of the prisoners. Biff realized then that they were adding more than knots. They were twisting leather thongs about the ropes and tying those, too. Getting out was going to prove a longer job than Farriel had said. But Biff caught a head-shake from Uncle Charlie, indicating that a protest would be

useless. And Kaldah made a slight shrug that could have been interpreted as a head-shake, too.

All this was lost on Abu Bey, who now was circled by a flock of villagers, who had turned quite friendly and wanted to see more *gilli-gilli*, which he showed them. Farriel's men were finishing the loading of the trucks, when he turned to the row of seated prisoners and blandly announced:

"Now, I can tell you what you have probably already guessed. Ten years ago, Dr. Thaddeus Croft found the lost Tomb of Reth, during his last expedition to this valley. I know, because I was with him. Inside the tomb was fabulous treasure. So we took it, with Reth's mummy, his sarcophagus and all.

"You ask why Dr. Croft did that, considering his great reputation as an Egyptologist? The answer is simple. He was no longer dealing with the old Egyptian government with which he had made his original negotiations many years before. The men he had bribed and paid off were no longer in office. The new government was ready to appropriate whatever Dr. Croft might find and pay him much less than he demanded.

"So we rifled the tomb and then closed it." Farriel paused and pointed high up on the cliff. "We blasted rock from the upper excavation, so it slid down on the lower, and covered it, as you saw. We shipped all the relics of Prince Reth down to Cairo, and can you guess where we put them?" Farriel paused to chuckle. "In Azab Habu's warehouse, where they are still."

The trucks were loaded and workers were clamber-

ing all over them, a dozen to a truck and half a dozen trucks in all. But Farriel had still more to tell.

"So Dr. Croft went back to England," he went on. "When he heard the Valley of Ghosts was to be flooded, he was very glad, for it would cover the empty tomb forever. But when Eric Yomer came into the picture, trouble began."

Farriel glared at Uncle Charlie and added:

"You and your ideas! All those letters to Dr. Croft! When he realized you might come to this valley without him, he went to London. There, he trapped this nephew of yours in the tomb in the museum cellar"—Farriel gestured toward Biff—"hoping that would put an end to your foolish notions. Later, he ran into the attendant, Montague, and trapped him the same way."

Charles Keene stared incredulously. Despite his present predicament, he was puzzled enough to ask:

"But how could Dr. Croft have done that? He had already left for Egypt, making the trip by train and boat—"

"So you thought," interposed Farriel. "Actually, Dr. Croft came later, by plane. He only pretended that he disliked traveling by air. Incidentally, while in London, he smuggled out the mummy case of Pattak, which he took from the museum. It reached Cairo by channels that we often use and is now in Azab Habu's place."

The trucks were ready to start, but Farriel still had a few more words for Biff.

"In Cairo," stated Farriel, "I arranged that trap in the pottery shop. Our idea was to hold your brother

and sister until your father would have to give up the expedition. Unfortunately, it did not work. Again, out at the rock temple, I was the man who toppled that pinnacle into your path. That also failed to stop you. But this time, all will work out as I planned it."

Farriel turned to Abu Bey, who was standing by. He gestured the *gilli-gilli* man toward a truck, with the comment:

"Come. We have no time to lose."

Abu Bey picked up the gnarled stick that was lying on the ground beside him, then gestured carelessly toward a pile of small stones.

"I bring my stick," said Abu Bey, "in case I want to change it into snake. But those stones, I do not need them. No reason to bring *haboob*, now that we are friends."

Abu Bey clambered on board the truck with Farriel and the big vehicles lumbered away, kicking up a cloud of dry, grimy dust. Through it, Biff saw the face of Farriel, staring back like an evil *jinn* or *afreet*. Then, amid the swirl, Biff noted something else—Abu Bey, pointing back with his stick, straight to the little stone pile.

The dust cloud rose higher, and when it had subsided, the procession of trucks had disappeared beyond the turn in the great winding valley.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Menace of the Nile

ONCE sure that the trucks had really gone, the prisoners began working on their bonds, only to realize what Biff had already guessed; that the leather wrist thongs could not be untied or even loosened. After nearly half an hour of exhaustive effort, they all sat panting in the hot sun, with the exception of Biff.

Little by little, Biff had been inching his way backward to the tiny stone pile toward which Abu Bey had pointed with his stick during the truck's departure. Probing with his fingers among the stones, Biff suddenly exclaimed, "Ouch!" and then called exultantly:

"There's a knife blade here! I figured Abu Bey had left something for us. Now we can make quick work of these thongs!"

It was only a small blade, for Abu Bey evidently had decided that anything larger might have been seen by some of Farriel's men. Biff worked his way over to Kamuka and as they sat back to back, Biff placed the knife in the Brazilian boy's hands. Kamuka was very deft at handling a knife, and soon he was sawing through Biff's thongs.

While this work was under way, Uncle Charlie put a question to Kaldah: "Tell me, how do you fit into all this?"

"I am a direct descendant of Pattak, the Tomb Builder," declared Kaldah proudly. "For years our family has been trying to find tombs built by our famous ancestor, including the Tomb of Reth. Always, we lived in the same village by the Nile, until the great dams were constructed and we were forced to move."

That explained the village in the *wadi*, where Kaldah rated as headman. But this descendant of Pattak had much more to tell.

"I help the Egyptian government," he explained, "when they try to stop people from stealing ancient relics and smuggling them from our country. I go to Cairo, to Alexandria, to Libya, and often to Tangier."

"And to London?" put in Biff.

"No, never to London," replied Kaldah.

"But I saw a face outside the tomb there," insisted Biff, "and it was either yours or Pattak's."

"From what I have heard," Kaldah said, "I think that Dr. Croft must have opened the door of the mummy case so that you saw the painted face of Pattak, just as the tomb closed."

Thinking back, Biff realized that Kaldah had the answer. During the last few weeks, while excavations had been under way, Kaldah had probably listened in on a lot of private talk, including discussions between Dr. Croft and Farriel.

"I knew what was happening in London," con-

tinued Kaldah. "I was suspicious of Dr. Croft because he delayed so much. When you came to Tangier"—Kaldah was speaking to Uncle Charlie—"I was watching for you. I entered your hotel room, hoping to photograph the documents you carried, so I could learn more about Croft."

Again Biff broke in. "Then those pirates—Blasco and Casimir—were actually working with you!" he asked.

"That night at the hotel, they were," returned Kaldah. "But snatching you away from the dock was their own idea. I told them to make sure that I was not followed, that was all. So they tried a game of their own, thinking they could make someone pay; but it failed.

"I shipped on board the *Helvetia* and posed both as a passenger and crew member from Tangier to Alexandria. On the last night, I managed to get the photographs, as you probably remember."

Biff remembered and smiled, but not just for that reason. He was free of his bonds now, so he took the knife and cut the thongs from Kamuka's wrists. That enabled Kamuka to make short work of Uncle Charlie's bonds, then Kaldah's, and finally Chandra's.

"From those photos," continued Kaldah, "I learned facts that confirmed my suspicions of Dr. Croft. So I watched his hotel room at the Alhambra, until Abu Bey began noticing me. Later, I picked up Farriel's trail, and it led me to Azab Habu's warehouse, where you saw me watching his office through a pair of binoculars."

"And you saw the scarab when Azab Habu held it close to the window!"

"I not only saw it," asserted Kaldah. "I recognized it as the long-lost Scarab of Thoth, a priceless memento that I had often described to my villagers, hoping they would come across it somewhere. I realized then that you must have picked it up in London, but I had no idea that you were leaving it with Azab Habu or that he knew its secret. I left the café across from the warehouse rather rapidly, if you will recall."

Kaldah was smiling broadly now, as he stood up and rubbed his chafed wrist, which bore welts from the leather thongs.

"And so, today," said Biff slowly, "you were really trying to help me when you called for the Token of Thoth as a test. You must have been surprised when three of us came up with scarabs!"

"Not too surprised," returned Kaldah. "I realized then that you must have ordered duplicates from Azab Habu. But when they all failed to work, I wondered whether Azab Habu had kept the original or given it to Dr. Croft. I was really surprised when Farriel showed it, and showed his hand as well." Kaldah shook his head and added, "I might say, showed his hand too well."

Now that the facts were known, they fitted as neatly as the granite blocks that formed the Tomb of Reth. While Uncle Charlie was discussing minor details with Kaldah, Biff decided to have a look inside the tomb and see how closely it compared to the London replica. Somewhat to his amazement, Biff found

it to be a perfect match, or as nearly so as he could remember. When he arrived in the inner vault, he reached up with his fingertips and just managed to touch the lower edge of the topmost stone, which was as tight as all the rest, exactly as in London.

When Biff emerged into the dazzling daylight, he found his companions eating lunch from the provisions that had been left them. Biff joined in the meal, and Uncle Charlie told him:

"We've decided to trek back to Kaldah's village, taking along our supplies, which won't be much to carry. Farriel is sure to be gone by the time we get there, so Kaldah will have no trouble taking over again as headman. Then we can map our future plans and contact your father down in Aswan."

That sounded like a simple routine, but just as they were about to start their long hike from the Valley of Ghosts, an interruption came, as Chandra pointed up the valley and exclaimed:

"Look there!"

Outlined against the sun, a man was jogging toward them, stumbling, pausing, as he waved a crooked stick that he carried. Instantly, Biff identified him. "Abu Bey!"

The *gilli-gilli* man now was staggering with every pace, so the boys dashed out and caught him as he practically toppled into their arms, gasping, "Water! Water!"

They brought him to the rockpile by the Tomb of Reth and poured him a long, cool drink from a *qulla*. Though practically exhausted, Abu Bey gradually re-

gained his speech in the form of a hoarse whisper.

"Out there," he gasped, "at the entrance to the valley—they came up and stopped the trucks—"

"Who stopped the trucks?" Uncle Charlie asked.

"Men in a big official car," explained Abu Bey. "They come from the Nile irrigation project. They say to Farriel, 'Get everybody out of valley!' He told them, 'Everybody is out. These trucks are the last.' Then, before I could shout, 'No, no!' they drove away in the official car."

"Everybody out!" Biff exclaimed. "They must be planning to flood the valley! Tell us the rest, Abu Bey."

"When the trucks start," declared Abu Bey, "I drop out the back, quick, and lie in dirt, flat, so dust hides me and Farriel cannot look back and see me. Then I start running here, to tell you. I run all the way."

"No wonder you are exhausted!" Uncle Charlie said. "Why, in this hot sun, that was worse than a marathon. Rest up awhile, and we'll get started."

"No time to rest," gasped Abu Bey. "No time now. Listen."

From far up the valley came a hollow, roaring sound that seemed to gather like the roll of thunder, sending its echoes ahead of it around the bend. A strange wind sighed down the valley, a peculiar chill pervaded the sun-drenched air as if all the legendary ghosts of the past had conspired to take over the haunted vale in the broad light of day.

Then, a yellowish foam appeared, flecked with a

white crest that lathered the rocky wall as it made the turn. Like a breaker crashing on a beach, it was followed by a larger billow, then another, which suddenly was topped by a mighty wall of muddy water, fifty feet or more in height, that made the dry rock shudder under its furious surge.

The whole tremendous force of the gigantic river Nile had been unloosed to turn this valley into a new arm of the ever-growing reservoir. A veritable tidal wave of doom, it was sweeping in upon the tiny human beings who were mere specks in comparison.

Trapped in the deepest portion of this straight-walled, rock-rimmed bowl, Biff Brewster and his companions had only seconds to spare before the mighty deluge would be full upon them!

CHAPTER XIX

One Last Chance

IT WAS Kaldah who shouted, his voice barely audible above the approaching roar, but his gestures graphic enough to convey an instantaneous impression. He swept his arm toward the food cartons and the water jars, then pointed to the gap in the tumbled rockpile.

"Gather the provisions!" was his order. "Carry them into the Tomb of Reth!"

With one accord, men and boys snatched up the provisions and covered the dozen-odd paces to the gaping tomb entrance, where they dived through and squirmed around the turn in the passage, each making way for the one who came next.

Last of the lot was Kaldah. The first rolling wave of foam was lashing the rocks beneath his feet as he found the outside catch that released the sliding door. Then, as the mechanism clicked and the barrier slid shut, Kaldah's figure came twisting through. He missed the crushing force of the closing stone by inches only, as a great spray of water showered through the narrowing gap. Then the tomb was solidly sealed—and none too soon.

There was a huge slap against the front of the tomb, then a tremendous crash, and finally a jolt so titanic that the whole solid structure seemed to quiver. Swirling sounds followed and then diminished, as Biff found his little flashlight and turned its probing rays along the inside of the tightly sealed door, where Kaldah was propped on one elbow at the spot where he had landed. There wasn't the slightest trickle between any of the stones. Kaldah saw that, and chuckled.

"My noble ancestor Pattak did well," he observed. "He made tombs watertight as well as airtight. Maybe he guessed some day this valley would be flooded."

"And now it is our turn to guess," put in Uncle Charlie, his voice slow and steady. "We must guess how long we can remain here, under hundreds of feet of water, before someone comes to rescue us, or before they even guess that we are here."

That brought theories from the boys. Despite their predicament, all three felt a sudden security at having been wrenched from the verge of disaster into this spot of safety. But their confidence was soon to be deflated.

They began talking about skin divers, submarine devices, and escape hatches, only to realize that none applied in this case. Glumly, they agreed that the only way they could get out would be if someone pumped the valley dry. And that, as Biff said, would take "a long, long time."

"A long, long time." The words were repeated in a croak that came from Abu Bey, whose throat was

still dry from the dust. "If we are to be here a long time, we must do as the fakir does when he is buried underground. He does not talk, he does not move, he does not eat or drink, he does not even breathe, except very little."

"What you mean," said Biff, "is that he goes into a trance."

"A trance, that is it."

"But suppose one of us can't go into a trance, Abu Bey?"

"Then I can put you in a trance," offered Abu Bey. "Like I do with snake. By pressing your neck in the right place. You become rigid and stay that way, like *naja haje*."

"Abu Bey means what he says," declared Charles Keene. "I think the less we say, the less we move, even the less we breathe, the less oxygen we will consume and the longer our limited supply will last. Perhaps we would do best just to think, until someone has a really great idea."

Long minutes of silence followed, and Biff had the weird feeling that gradually the minutes would grow into hours and then into days or even years. Once he had been trapped alone in a tomb like this; now that he had company, his plight seemed even worse. Sooner or later, someone would break under the tension that the situation was sure to induce. Biff dreaded what might happen then.

Silence, strict silence, in which breathing itself was reduced to the vanishing point. Then it was broken by Kaldah's quiet voice:

"I have an idea. Not mine, but one belonging to my great ancestor, Pattak. When others built tombs, they built them downward. Pattak's way was to build upward."

Brief silence; then Kaldah's voice came again:

"The way out will be upward."

"There was a way out from the tomb in London," Biff said slowly. "When the tomb was sealed, I found it; but not when it was open."

Uncle Charlie put the quick query: "Do you mean that loose stone you talked about in the inner vault?"

"Yes," replied Biff. "Perhaps I could find it again. Not in London, but right here and now."

"Show me the stone. I would like to see it," Kaldah said.

Using his little flashlight, Biff led the way to the inner vault, followed by the others. By then, his thoughts were becoming practical again.

"Today, I looked for the stone," he admitted, "and found it solidly in place. Of course, then the tomb was open. Now it is closed. But you can see for yourselves—"

They saw for themselves as the flashlight's beam licked the stone edge. No longer was the topmost stone tightly in place. There was a gap between its lower edge and the stone below it.

Uncle Charlie, a complete skeptic until this moment, suddenly exclaimed, "It must be connected with the hidden mechanism that closes the door of the tomb. When one is shut, the other opens. Let's try it and find out."

He shoved his hands up to the ceiling, only to be stopped by Kaldah, who inquired:

"Remember what happened to the man in London? The museum attendant who was struck down by an unseen hand?"

Keen nodded. "You mean Montague."

"That was his name. Maybe I can show you what I think happened to him." Kaldah turned to Abu Bey. "Let me have the stick."

Abu Bey handed over his stick, and Kaldah thrust one end of it into the flashlight's beam and pressed the stone above the widened crack. Instantly, the stone swung downward, describing a quarter circle. Then it seemed to bounce back into place.

"Now we know what hit Montague," decided Kaldah. "That is what happens to those who enter the tomb and try to learn its secret. Now let us try it another way."

He pressed the stick into the crack again, and as the stone swung downward, Kaldah thrust his arm upward, stick and all. He trapped the hinged block before it could recoil, then found a hidden catch that kept it down. But that was not all. Kaldah drew Biff forward, turned his hand upward, so the flashlight glowed through the open ceiling of the tomb. There, leading up through the cliff above them, was a steep, narrow stairway hewn through the rock.

One by one, they wormed up through the roof of the tomb, Kaldah coming last. The hinged block clicked shut after him, indicating that there might be no return below. But no one was thinking in such

terms, at least not yet. From the direction of the steps and their sharp slant, they seemed to be leading beyond the rocky brow that formed the valley's brim.

They came to a dead end, in the form of a flat stone slab. They eased aside to let Kaldah squeeze past, so he could probe it for a hidden catch. Patiently, for long painful minutes, Kaldah worked on this new riddle devised by his ancestor, Pattak. At last he solved it. A catch sprang; the slab yielded, but only slightly.

They rammed it again and again with their shoulders—Keene, Kaldah, Biff, and the other boys, even Abu Bey. With each effort, the barrier gave a little more. Then, as Biff and Chandra drove shoulder to shoulder, it broke entirely, and they plunged headlong through a layer of sand and rubble that brought them out on a gradual but rocky slope.

They had guessed right. The hidden exit from the Tomb of Reth was beyond the brow of the bowl. It was only a short way to the top, so they climbed up to it and looked down into the Valley of Ghosts. Instead of a valley, they saw a swirling, muddy lake, already a hundred feet deep and still filling rapidly. Then, above the tumult of the water, they heard a sharper roar and looked up to see a helicopter hovering overhead.

Soon, the 'copter landed and Biff's father sprang out, followed by Eric Yomer. They hurriedly joined the group and when they heard brief details of what had happened, Mr. Brewster nodded grimly.

"Dr. Croft told us that he had contacted Cairo and

was promised another month to continue excavations," explained Mr. Brewster. "Then, today in Aswan, we learned that the valley was already being flooded. Next, we heard that Croft had skipped out, in a hired plane, and that he had stopped somewhere to pick up Farriel. They probably headed for the interior of Africa, anywhere to get beyond Egyptian jurisdiction."

The party returned to Aswan by a series of helicopter lifts. From there, Kaldah put in a phone call to Cairo, and a quick raid was made on Azab Habu's warehouse, before he could remove the priceless treasures of Prince Reth. They were found in the old crates that Azab Habu had claimed were filled with worthless curios and other junk.

At the Aswan Airport, a few days later, Biff's father held a last short chat with Kaldah.

"Croft probably expected Farriel to take over before you found the Tomb of Reth," asserted Mr. Brewster. "He didn't know your men could work so fast."

"Here is the man you can thank for that." Kaldah gestured to Abu Bey, who was standing close by. "His snake trick really made them hurry."

"And even though Croft and Farriel became worried and fled," Mr. Brewster added, "we never would have learned the full details of their game if you hadn't found that secret way out from the Tomb of Reth."

"And for that," said Kaldah, with his cryptic smile, "you can thank your son Biff."

Biff didn't have time to disclaim the credit, for

their plane was ready to take off for Cairo. Biff went on board with Chandra and Kamuka. As the plane was starting down the runway, the boys looked back to see a calm, poised figure raising one arm in a sweeping, parting wave.

On one point, Biff, Chandra, and Kamuka all agreed. In the series of strange adventures they had just experienced, Kaldah, the man who looked like Pattak, had played the master hand.

A Biff Brewster Mystery Adventure

MYSTERY OF THE TIBETAN CARAVAN

By ANDY ADAMS

PURSUIT BY COMMUNIST AGENTS, capture by dreaded Khamba tribesmen who cripple their prisoners, and an unplanned expedition into the Himalaya Mountains challenge Biff Brewster in his attempt to smuggle the Glowing Buddha, sacred symbol of the Dalai Lama, out of Red-occupied Tibet.

The mission, originally undertaken by Biff's father, grows more dangerous hourly when the Reds, who have tried for years to get their hands on the statue, set a trap, planning to let Mr. Brewster locate the Buddha, then snatch it from him.

Warned of the plot, Biff sets out to prevent his father from unwittingly leading the Reds to the legendary phantom caravan which—if it exists—supposedly guards the sacred statue.

The color, the violence and mystery of the Forbidden Land are revealed to Biff as he and his Tibetan companion, Taz Norkay, push deeper and deeper into its uncharted trails. Beset by enemies, befriended by strange monks, Biff and Taz finally are confronted by an aged "specter" whose magnetic, hypnotic eyes radiate unfathomable strength.

Biff's success — his tangible contribution to the cause of the Free World — concludes a thoroughly satisfying story of harrowing adventures high in the Himalayas.

GROSSET & DUNLAP

NEW YORK 10, N. Y.